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AUTHOR Lindner, Steven
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ABSTRACT

This report compares dropout prevention programs in six cities. Questionnaires were completed by program coordinators, staff members, and students in order to determine what might make such a program succeed. The report includes a review of the literature, a description of methods employed in research, and summaries of survey responses in narrative and tabular form. The findings are discussed in the last section. The author concludes that a truly effective attendance and dropout prevention program would begin in the elementary school years, when patterns of attendance are formed. A bibliography is included, followed by copies of the questionnaires used. (DM)

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DROPOUT PREVENTION:
A SURVEY OF SIX URBAN PROGRAMS

Submitted by Steven Lindner

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This study sought to isolate factors within dropout prevention programs that lead to success. The study focused on six urban school districts that emphasize attendance improvement within their programs: Community School District 4 of the Board of Education of the City of New York, Chicago Public Schools, New Orleans Public Schools, Portland Public Schools, the San Francisco Unified School District and the Los Angeles School District.

Despite differences in size, budget or political climates, these cities shared a unifying mission: to keep students in school, and help students take responsibility for their own actions and, ultimately, achieve financial independence. Three surveys were created: One for program coordinators, one for program staff and one for students participating in the programs. The schools and districts were chosen because of their size and commitment to their students The overall response rate was 92%.

The survey concludes with observations and recommendations to improve services for at risk students. The results indicate a clear need to create standards for success, both in programs and in student achievement; isolate successful components of programs and traits of dropout prevention staff so that they may be replicated and developed in other programs; help the school evolve as service provider to, and an instrument of, the community; to be a resource rather than a site of conflict.

The study also examines and recommends changes in the curriculum to alter the pattern of failure often felt by at risk students by providing relevant, motivating course work and career counseling. Changing teacher attitudes is crucial to engender changing student attitudes as is developing parent involvement strategies so parents become visible allies of the school and its programs.

The study recommends further analysis of the early grades for clues as to what makes a student drop out and suggests that criteria for defining at risk students be developed for the early grades so that schools may intervene early in a student's school career, before the student develops a life-long pattern of failure and alienation.

The survey concludes with observations and recommendations in several areas, including: problem definition, measuring program success, career counseling and planning, keeping students in school once they have made the decision to return, parental involvement, reasons for not being in school, the role of the school in the community, dropout staff development, how programs can be improved, teacher attitudes, restructuring the curriculum, changing the patterns of failure, study early grades for clues to later dropping out and working with students earlier in their school careers, symptoms appear.

A COMPARISON OF DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS IN SIX URBAN AREAS IN THE UNITED STATES

Submitted by:
Steven Lindner
Teachers College
Columbia University
August 20, 1990

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I. INTRODUCTION

Young people spend much of their lives in school, often seeing more of their teachers than they do their parents. Hopefully, the values and lessons they learn in school will enable them to make appropriate decisions about the direction of their lives. Many young people, however, have not found relevance in their school experiences. Many express their dissatisfaction with school in a direct way: they don't attend. Some attend sporadically, others formally withdraw from school and many just stop going and never return. The nation's dropout rate has remained fairly constant; 25% since 1958 (Peng, 1985).

In the 1950's and 1960's there was a need for unskilled workers, therefore, there was not as much concern that one out of every four young people was not completing high school. Today's job market, however, is increasingly directed towards a service economy. Many jobs are created each year but go unfilled because people lack the skills to function in them (Justiz & Kameen, 1986). The dropout rate in cities is astronomical: in some urban school systems, one-half of the student population does not graduate from high school. With the new movement towards academic excellence, greater attention is directed towards those who are failing in school and they are the focus of many papers, symposiums and grant proposals. "Dropouts are a growth industry" (Mann, 1986, p.9): there are a

plethora of dropout prevention programs in existence today, designed to entice, lure and otherwise motivate those students who are at-risk of not completing high school to stay and graduate. There are so many programs, it is hard to know which are effective, which are ineffective and which have elements that can be utilized in combination with aspects of other programs. Some programs focus on high school students, while others are directed at junior high or elementary school children.

Some studies (Gray-Shoffner,1986,Mann,1986) indicate that attendance patterns and attitudes towards school develop early in a person's life. By the time a student reaches high school, patterns are generally established and intervention is often too late. It follows then, that we need to address the pattern formation of children at an earlier time in their formal education.

In this project, I investigated six attendance improvement programs in urban areas in the United States. Utilizing a written survey, I tried to determine how these programs function; their similarities, the differences between them, what they do that works, what they do that doesn't work, what should be included in programs and what should be discarded.

I surveyed program coordinators to determine the official positions and philosophies guiding the programs. I also surveyed those staff members responsible for the daily functioning of the programs: facilitators,

teachers, counselors, social workers, etc. Finally, I interviewed students to see what they thought about themselves, school and the program.

Combining and comparing this information, I believed I could determine the components of a successful dropout prevention and attendance improvement program for students in large school systems who are at-risk of not completing school.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS/DISTRICTS

San Francisco Unified School District

In the Mission District of San Francisco, the predominant culture is Hispanic. To work with Latino youth and also adolescents on probation, the Real Alternatives Program (RAP) School was created. This program promotes youth taking responsibility for their actions and attempts to provide alternatives for incarceration by addressing the needs of at risk adolescents and their families.

New Orleans Public Schools

The SUCCESS (Successful Utilization of Concentrated Efforts for Student Success) program attempts to identify early those who are at risk of not completing their education. Other goals are to increase the sensitivity of teaching staffs to the students and their problems; develop intervention strategies to keep students in school; improve attendance; develop training

for parents to help them assist their children to succeed. It stresses counseling and provides strategies for academic achievement and socialization. Special emphasis is placed on Black males.

Chicago Public Schools

The TAP-ONE program was designed to develop strategies to reduce absenteeism and utilizes school, home and community resources to achieve that goal. Counseling is a basic component of this program and each student in the program is diagnosed on the causes of his/her truancy before entering it. Information on each student is continuously updated. Other components are telephone calls, home visits and intervention with the teachers and administrators responsible for that student.

District 4, Board of Education City of New York

District 4 is located in the East Harlem section of New York City. Its population is predominantly Hispanic and Black. The district has had an attendance improvement program in operation for the past five years. The basic components of the program are counseling, attendance improvement, home visits and parental involvement. Each junior high school in the program is staffed with a facilitator, a social worker, school aides and family assistants. This staff provides counseling, outreach to families of participants, referral to many different kinds of social services, tutoring and after-school activities. The program has recently been expanded to

include elementary schools in the belief that the earlier changes in attendance behavior is made, the more likely it is that the students will stay in school and graduate from high school. Students are selected by various criteria: attendance, grades in major subjects, proficiency in English, overage for grade and those in temporary housing (e.g., shelters). Attendance is monitored daily and phone calls are made after one absence. Home visits are made after several absences.

Los Angeles Unified School District

A. Lincoln High School

The Very Important Pupil Program (VIP) has four components: attendance, academics, personal development and parental involvement. Students are placed in VIP homerooms and attendance is monitored daily. Academic achievement is also monitored and tutoring is provided as needed. Alternative education settings are provided (after-school programs, adult education, Saturday classes, occupational training). Staff-mentors "adopt" students.

B. Junior High School Student Assistance Program

Among the basic components of this program are: counseling, placement coordinators to evaluate and recommend placement of students to the appropriate centers and, classes of 15 - 18 students to provide intensive remediation and counseling. Home visits and other strategies to increase

parental involvement are undertaken, as are referrals to social service agencies.

Portland Public Schools

The Portland program is part of the state's Student Retention Initiative to identify at risk youth at an early age and to help them overcome the problems that may contribute to their dropping out. The program goal attempts to keep all at risk students in school but targets the elementary school student, because the earlier a student can be helped, the more likely he/she is to remain in school. Collaboration between state agencies is an important component of the program.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much has been written on the problem of non-attendance and dropping out of school, with many studies drawing very different conclusions on what factors work "best" in prevention. Indeed, few studies even agree on what a dropout is! It is very difficult to define "dropout" (Strother, 1986, Mann, 1986, Morrow, 1986) because many school districts change the definition to match the purpose for which statistics are kept (Strother, 1986) and also because "different surveys and accounting practices lead to quite different results" (Cook, et. al., 1985, p.3, Hammack 1986). Morrow (1986) agrees and further notes that competing concerns overrule the desire for a consistent definition.

"Dropping out almost always diminishes the quality of life of a dropout" (Justiz & Kameen, 1986, p.104). We are not able to fill new jobs, which are being created at a rate of four million per year (Justiz & Kameen, 1986). Dropping out increases the likelihood that the dropout, and his/her family will rely on public assistance.

The education reform movement grew out of the reaction to the belief that American students were less intellectually capable than they had been in the past (Timpane, 1989). In 1977, the Educational Testing Service reported that high school SAT scores had been declining for several years and many believed this to be the result of a less rigorous education

(Timpane, 1989). As a reaction to these statistics, the push towards excellence in education was undertaken. The structure of this drive towards excellence, however, may place additional burdens on young people, which only serves to increase the dropout rate. Howe (1985) says that various reform commissions have noted that the dropout problem should receive highest priority but, as of 1984, while most states had enacted legislation demanding higher educational standards, not one program was passed to address those who are even more at-risk from the new standards (Mann, 1986). Former Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education, Nathan Quinones, has warned that if we don't deal with this problem now, "we are going to sap the strength of this country" (Solorzano, 1986, p.77).

Young people leave school for a variety of reasons. The reasons cited most often are that they: 1) did not like school, 2) had poor grades, 3) could not get along with their teachers, 4) decided to work, 5) needed to help support their families, 6) became pregnant, 7) got married and 8) were suspended or expelled (Ekstrom, et. al., 1987, Mann, 1987, Hammack, 1986, Duncan, 1980, McDill, et. al., 1986). McDill also notes that unclear and unfair rules further alienate those who do not act in a socially acceptable manner.

Sometimes, researchers point out, the school promotes dropping out with

teachers who are not interested or don't have the time to respond to the needs of their students. Larger schools exacerbate these problems with overcrowded classrooms (Olsen & Moore, 1982), poor teacher-administration cooperation, and emphasis on classroom management rather that classroom instruction (Mann,1986).

Paid employment also presents problems for those at-risk. Money is very attractive to adolescents, with success being measured by a paycheck. For those who have not succeeded in school, this is very tempting. The problem lies in the fact that these jobs have been "dumbed down" and lead nowhere (Mann, 1986). These students see money and independence in jobs. They do not realize that, in the long run, they will earn much less than their peers who complete school. For example, in 1981, high school graduates earned a minimum of $60 per week more than dropouts (Morgan, 1984).

McDill, et.al. (1986) believe that there are certain characteristics that can be changed that will affect students' attitudes towards school and dropping out. These are not academic changes, but are focused more on the physical structure and "feeling" of the schools: making them more human. They include reducing the size of large schools, making them more personal, changing the structure and the content of the curriculum, changing the climate of the school, rewarding academic excellence and emphasizing excellence by students, teachers and administrators.

Hammack (1986) questions the practicality of holding students over in a grade, given the disproportionate number of dropouts who are at least one year older than their peers. Since we know that they are already having difficulty in school, they can be identified as being at-risk and provided with special attention such as smaller instructional groups, more personal relations with teachers, tutoring (peer and professional) and counseling.

Floraline Stevens of the Los Angeles Unified School District stresses that schools must address four factors to decrease the number of dropouts: 1) alienation from teachers, administrators and peers, 2) poor attendance, 3) low academic achievement, especially in reading, 4) negative economic and social pressures at home or in school (Strother, 1986). Doss (1983), believes that it may be reasonable for some youngsters to drop out before finishing high school, arguing that their presence disrupts the learning of others and they get little out of school themselves.

There have been many recent recommendations in the literature to reduce the absentee and dropout problems. They range from the traditional "students must accept responsibility for their actions" solution (Teachman, 1979) to programs that promote comprehensive guidance, K-12 (Schmidt, 1988). Some think that the first step is to develop a standard

definition of "dropout" and set up a minimum reporting structure on students so that we have a standardized system of analysis (Morrow, 1986, Strother, 1986).

Lax attendance policies may contribute to the dropout problem, and some postulate that each school must enforce its own attendance policies (Sharp, 1984, Teachman, 1979). The Los Angeles Unified School District wants to identify successful dropout prevention efforts on all levels and set up some short- and long-range programs that will reduce the dropout rate and entice dropouts to return to school.

One approach is to identify them early in their school careers and utilize that knowledge to set up alternative educational programs for those students (Hamilton, 1987). In addition, there are recommendations for stronger vocational components to teach trades to those who are not able to function at passing levels in the regular school curriculum (Azcoitia & Viso, 1987).

Many believe that elementary school is where the problems begin. Gray-Shoffner (1986) notes that "most problems erupt before high school" (p.53) and Mann (1986) has stressed that the best way to avoid dropouts in high school is to create a successful elementary school experience.

A number of researchers have recommended that schools form partnerships with businesses to utilize corporate expertise and finances

(Justiz and Kameen, 1986, Mann, 1987). Coalitions are needed to plan, implement and assess programs and policies.

Now that we have acknowledged the seriousness of the dropout problem, we are rushing to apply band-aids to every minor scrape. Perhaps we need to decide what works and what doesn't before funding one particular method. Doss of the Austin Independent School District, cautions that keeping children in school is equally as important as is the need to establish a minimum number of basic skills and provide activities that students find valuable and engaging. He further states that dropout prevention programs must have clear plans of action and serve small groups of students. Equally important are the expectations of teachers that students succeed. Before we try to implement recommendations, we must remember that there is no single reason for dropping out. Programs, therefore, must take into account student diversity and plan for intervention programs on different levels (Anderson, 1984).

Dropping out is a symptom, not a cause of the problem, that creates at-risk students and young adults in both school and work (Hamilton,1987). These students have a history of failure in formal school settings and are not given the opportunity to utilize other settings for learning (Hamilton,1987). Their attendance patterns develop early in elementary school and carry over into their social and work lives (Sharp,

1984). We are being forced to explore the causes as well as the symptoms that lead to becoming at-risk. We must look for them in much the same way scientists search for cures for diseases. Losing so many youngsters each year has created a crisis which will affect our nation's future.

Those who become at-risk stand a much greater chance not only of dropping out, but also of becoming alienated from, and not becoming productive members of, society. They have a much greater chance of becoming dependent on society for survival because they cannot function in the mainstream.

III. METHODOLOGY

In conducting this research, I used six urban school districts as the basis of my analysis. I used two methods of collecting data: data supplied by the school districts themselves and information collected through written surveys. The surveys attempted to ascertain the subjects' own definitions of "dropout" and the number of dropouts they had the year before the program was implemented as well as the dropout rate now. The data will also include racial, age, grade and family structure information. The surveys follow this report.

I chose to investigate several school districts that have functioning attendance programs and which use a variety of methods to increase

attendance and increase the success in school that these students experience.

This project was begun as an attempt to isolate variables within dropout prevention programs which emphasize attendance improvement.

The cities surveyed represent urban areas with specific problems that face each school system regardless of its size, budget or political orientation: how to keep its youth from leaving school early and help them achieve financial independence and the ability to take responsibility for their own actions.

To achieve as comprehensive a picture of each program as possible, three surveys were created: One for program coordinators, one for program staff and one for students participating in the programs.

The schools and districts were chosen because of their work in dropout prevention. The staff members were chosen by their program coordinators and the students were selected primarily by the staff members.

The response rate, 92%, was much higher than expected: out of 75 surveys sent out 68 were returned (seven out of seven program coordinators, 15 out of 18 staff members and 46 out of 50 students).

My conclusions are based on an analysis of the data to determine what factors need to be present in a successful attendance improvement and dropout prevention program. My recommendations for improving those

programs and for future studies are based on the data analysis described above.

IV. DATA

A. Survey Summaries

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What is your title?

There was no one standard title for those who coordinate at risk programs in the schools. Job titles ranged from Administrator of Pupil Services to advisor and counselor to program coordinator of one degree or another.

2. How long have you been in this position?

The length of time in position ranged from six months to four years.

3. How does your school define "dropout"?

The schools had very different measures for defining a dropout. In San Francisco a dropout is one who is not attending school regularly, is truant or cutting.

In New Orleans, dropouts are defined as those students who have passed the age up to which the district must provide a free, public education; have not graduated, completed an approved program or died and whose educational status subsequent to leaving school is unknown; moved and are not known to be in school; transferred to an unapproved private school in a state which has an approval system; in an institution whose function is not

primarily educational (Army, corrections, hospital) and not considered a special school district; out of school with an unverified illness; not returned to school after a period of suspension or expulsion; expelled with no option to return, or; in a program not approved or administered by the district or a program classified as adult education.

Chicago's guideline is the Illinois School Code which states that any child enrolled in grades 1-12 whose name has been removed from the district enrollment roster for any reason other than death, extended illness, graduation or completion of a program of studies and who has not transferred to another public or private school.

In District 4, New York City, a dropout is a student 16 years of age or older who has not attended school for over one year.

In the Los Angeles Unified School District a dropout is a student who stops attending school prior to receiving a diploma (or its equivalent) and who does not enroll in another institution or program within 45 days of ceasing attendance.

Finally, Portland defines dropout as a student who shows a leave code of L-8 (withdrawn because of other reasons), quit school after passing compulsory attendance age or is issued a work permit and leaves school.

4. <u>How does your school define an "at risk" student?</u>

A similarity existed among all respondents definitions. While all schools

had a distinct definition, all programs mentioned behavior as an indication of problems which may interfere with a student's completing school.

In San Francisco, a student who receives grades of "D", "F" or has an "Incomplete", does not attend school regularly, has discipline/behavior problems is at risk. In New Orleans it is a student who is in danger of failing to complete his/her education with an adequate level of skills. Although Chicago has no formal definition of at risk, they note that it is a generic term referring to any student who is experiencing problems and may be prone to failure or to anti-social and/or damaging behaviors. They further note that a child's social environment often is a factor. District 4 in New York City defines an at risk student as one who has displayed behaviors that will lead to dropping out of school. Most important among these behaviors is high absenteeism, followed by low performance on standardized tests, and failure in major academic subjects and being overage for one's grade. At Lincoln High School in Los Angeles a student who has personal problems that interfere with his/her education is considered to be at risk.

5. Did you have an attendance or dropout prevention program last year?

All respondents had an attendance improvement and/or a dropout prevention program last year (1988-1989 school year). San Francisco, the

newest program in the survey, began its program in February 1989.

6. What was the dropout rate the year before the program was implemented?

Of the schools/districts responding, one had a dropout rate of under ten percent, two between ten and 20 percent and one between 21 and 30 percent.

7. What is the dropout rate now?

Respondents reported no change in the dropout percentage range before or after their dropout program was implemented.

The New York City Public Schools does not maintain a dropout rate below the high school level, but District 4 in East Harlem maintains an attendance rate for its own junior high students. The attendance rate for the 1986-87 school year was 83.25% and the attendance rate for the 1987-1988 school year was 81.45%. This lends credence to the idea that a program can be successful and not appear to have improved its dropout rate since the percentage change in District 4 is 1.8%.

8. How do you measure the dropout rate?

The measurement of the dropout rate differed radically between the various schools/districts. San Francisco measures its dropout rate by the records it maintains on monthly cutting, truancy and absenteeism. Chicago uses its own adjusted high school membership figures based on yearly

attendance. The Los Angeles Unified School District collects data to provide both a one year and three year dropout rate. Portland measures the dropout rate by dividing the number of students who show a leave code of L-8 (see Question 3) by the total student enrollment as of October 10 of a given school year. One school district did not respond, and , as noted in question #7, District 4 does not measure system-wide for elementary and junior high school students.

9. How many students were targeted for the program this year?

All respondents surveyed administer their programs to more than 100 students and five of the seven administer programs to more than 150 students.

10. What grade does this program include?

Of the schools that responded to this question, two are K-12, one is K-9 , two are 9-12 and one is 6-9. Chicago does not include students by grade, but by age according to the Illinois School Code's compulsory school attendance age, 7-16 years.

11. What criteria do you use when targeting students for this program?

All schools/districts responding use attendance as a criterion and most use several criteria. Seven use absenteeism, two use punctuality, four use reading scores, five use academic performance. Other criteria include

limited English proficiency, behavior reports and being overage for one's grade.

II. STAFFING

12. How was staff for this program chosen?

Two districts make their staff choices on a voluntary basis and six by special competency. One administrator uses both criteria.

13. Do you think that any kind of special training is necessary for staff in this program?

All coordinators think that special training is necessary for staff in this program.

14. If yes, what kind of training?

Five programs believe that training in individual counseling is necessary for their programs, four believe training in group counseling is necessary. Six feel that sensitivity training is necessary. One each believe that behavior management, classroom management, team building and multidisciplinary training are important. Also mentioned were instructional strategies for the disadvantaged, language training and drug and alcohol counseling.

15. Does your school provide training for program staff?

Only New Orleans does not provide training for its staff but reports that it structures and finds its own training.

16. What kind of training?

There is no standard training that staff members receive.

In San Francisco counseling training is provided.

Chicago offers on-going, professional, in-service training related to at risk students. Its staff also participates in outside workshops and conferences.

District 4 in New York City prepares its staff with training in child abuse, suicide and AIDS prevention, multicultural counseling and family counseling. In addition, staff receives on-going training in program administration and clerical issues and on district and city-wide attendance policies. The middle school program in Los Angeles holds monthly in-service training based on teacher-identified areas of need, while Lincoln High School in Los Angeles provides workshops for its staff and Portland's staff receives in-service drug, alcohol and child abuse training.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL POLICIES

17. What strategies to improve attendance are being tried in your school?

Eighteen different strategies are being tried by the respondents. Of these, counseling is the one strategy used by each. Tutoring, home visits,

incentives and parental involvement are being tried in six of the schools/districts. Four use detention while peer counseling, job training, business alliances, suspension and independent study are being used in two programs. Reporting truancy to police, reducing school size, mini-schools and individualized instruction are also used.

18. Of the strategies checked in #17, which do you feel are the three most effective?

Of the 18 strategies reported in question #17, counseling is believed, by all respondents, to be one of the three most effective strategies. Four respondents feel that home visits are among the three most effective strategies, three that incentives and parental involvement are among the most effective, one that tutoring is and one individualized instruction.

19. Of the strategies checked in #17, which are the three least effective?

While no one strategy was singled out as least effective, four respondents rated suspension and four rated detention as one of the three least effective strategies. Two rated parental involvement, one rated reporting truancy to police and one rated tutoring as among the three least effective strategies.

20. If incentives are used in your program, what are they?

Of all the schools/districts surveyed, only one does not use incentives to improve attendance. Prizes of all sizes and shapes are given out by the other six programs and consist of small items like stickers and pens, calculators, notebooks, clocks, dictionaries, small stuffed animals and tee shirts. Awards and certificates are also given out and students who qualify are taken on trips. Food, or gift certificates for food, are also used as an incentive. One district (New Orleans) reports that praise is used as an incentive as is extra time with a special staff person.

IV. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

21. Comment on this statement: "Parental involvement is very important to the program's success".

All the schools/districts agree (4 strongly, 3 somewhat) that parental involvement is very important to the program's success.

22. Approximately what percentage of parents with children in the program actively participate in the program?

Three respondents get 15% or fewer parents of students in the program to take part in program activities. Two get between 15% and 25%. Two respondents, however, report that they have a large number of parents involved in school activities. Both coordinators are from the Los Angeles

Unified School District and say that the have 50-75% (Lincoln High) and75-100% (middle school program) of the parents with children in the program actively participating.

23. Do you find it difficult to get parents, in general, involved in school activities?

Of those responding, all feel it is difficult getting parents of students in the program involved in school activities.

24. Do you find it more difficult getting parents of students in the program involved in school activities than getting parents in general involved?

Five respondents feel that it is more difficult getting parents of students in the program involved. The advisor to the middle school program in Los Angeles feels it is the same and New Orleans feels it is actually easier to involve parents of targeted students.

25. Why do you think that is?

The respondents believe that there are many reasons that it is more difficult to involve parents of students in the various programs in school activities. Several feel that the parents are simply not interested. Other reasons given are that the parents have language difficulties, and time conflicts due to work schedules. Some believe that the parents are afraid of school because it is an official institution, or that the parents are

overwhelmed by poverty and/or dependency and addiction. Some respondents think that the families are too nomadic and dysfunctional to participate in activities of an institution in which their children will not spend that much time. New Orleans responded, however, that parents are "desperate" to help their children and so, will participate in what is offered to them, depending on what is offered and how it is presented to them.

26. What kinds of parental involvement activities are included in your program?

Of the activities for parents sponsored by the programs, all include workshops, two include trips and some schools/districts report that they visit parents at home and put out weekly and monthly newsletters. Other programs have parent support groups and network with parents. One district tries to find short-term employment for its program's parents and New Orleans also uses parents' skills to work with children on academic problems, act as role models for other parents and to facilitate support groups.

27. What methods could be used to get more parents involved?

All seven of the respondents reported that they hold workshops, yet four of the seven listed workshops as a method that could be used to increase parent involvement. Other methods include luncheons, trips and

entertainment, family and parent services such as parenting and adult education classes, health services and employment referrals.

V. PROGRAM EVALUATION

28. Comment on this statement: "The program has improved students' attendance".

All of the program administrators agreed with this statement: two agreed strongly and five agreed somewhat. All state that their programs have been successful. As noted in questions 6 and 7, however, the dropout rate before the programs were implemented and the dropout rate at the time of the survey were in the same 10 percent range.

Six of the seven schools/districts choose their staff by special competency and all believe that special training is necessary for their programs.

29. How long does it take before you see program-induced improvements in student attendance?

Two respondents report that they see improvements as a result of their programs within six months, three within one year and one in under two years.

30. Do changes need to be made in your school's program?

All respondents agree that changes need to be made in their schools'/districts' programs.

31. If yes, what kind of changes?

Most of the schools/districts focus on the causes of alienation (sensitivity of staff, class size, staff to student ratio, contact with parents, increased student-staff interaction and peer counseling) when describing the kinds of changes needed in their schools' programs. Only one program administrator, for the middle schools in Los Angeles, feels that the changes should be made to include more students. New Orleans thinks that the curriculum should be changed to provide more academic opportunities for the at risk student. Six think that their programs should include more contact with parents. Five would like to see more staff training, while five think that their programs should be changed to include smaller staff to student ratio.

Four would like to change their programs to include more interaction with students' teachers and two would add more incentives.

32. Should the program be expanded in your school?

All of the respondents feel that the program should be expanded in their schools.

33. <u>If yes, what would it include that it does not now?</u>

While all schools/districts agreed in question #28 that their programs have improved the attendance of their targeted populations, they want to expand their programs and the techniques used in those programs. The program coordinators appear committed to try any method possible to raise attendance and change attitudes towards school. The respondents had very different feelings about what they would like to expand their programs to include. Four of the respondents would expand their programs to include business alliances and a few would include peer counseling and job training. Other options that the schools/districts would like to try are counseling, tutoring, home visits, incentives, parental involvement, reducing school size, mini-schools, smaller class size, independent study and mentoring.

34. <u>How would you rate this program in terms of its effect on improving students attendance?</u>

While all agreed in question #28 that their programs have improved student attendance, in this follow-up question, five rated their programs as "Excellent" or "Very good" while two rated their programs as "Fair".

35. Comment on this statement: "The program has improved students' academic performance".

All who responded felt that students have improved in their academic performance as a result of being in the program.

36. On what do you base this conclusion?

The respondents use a variety of methods to determine the conclusion reached in #35. Of the two districts that did not respond, District 4, New York City noted that it does not use grades as a criterion for inclusion in its program. They also do not officially track grades as part of their program. The other programs base their assessments on several methods: five use class grades, two use standardized test scores, three base their judgments on teacher evaluations and two on feedback from students. Five of the seven respondents state that academic performance is a basis for inclusion in the program. Four use reading scores as another basis for inclusion. Therefore, it is assumed that academic performance can be tracked .

37. What improvements, if any, would you like to see in the program?

New Orleans said that it would want increased acceptance and support from their schools' faculties and staff, improved efforts to make program goals consistent with school system goals, and examination of the

systemic causes for "high risk" students rather than blaming the student. Chicago would expand its program to service more students and find more ways of reaching and involving parents. District 4 would expand the elementary school programs in two ways: provide each school with a licensed counselor or social worker and expand the program to other eligible elementary schools. While the Los Angeles middle schools administrator did not respond to this question, the coordinator from Lincoln High School in Los Angeles would like more support from parents.

38. Do you think the school can effectively reduce the dropout rate on its own?

Respondents were evenly divided on this issue. Of the six schools/districts that responded to this question, three feel that the school can effectively reduce the dropout rate on its own while three feel that it could not.

39. Does the school need to work on this problem with other groups or agencies?

All respondents agreed that the school needs to work on the dropout rate with other groups or agencies.

40. If yes, what groups?

The administrators responded that they would use almost any group they could to help reduce the dropout rate: business, police, courts, social service agencies, legislatures, parents and the community.

41. How would you rate the attitudes of the school staff toward the program?

Most said that the staffs of their schools ranged from extremely cooperative to somewhat cooperative.

42. What makes your program special?

New Orleans feels that it is a committed staff willing to take risks and put themselves out: people who care about what happens to kids. Chicago believes that it is its ability to reach students early in the chronic truancy cycle and that it has includes a committed staff which interacts with students and serves as a positive role model. New York's District 4 believes that its program is made special by a dedicated staff that acts as student advocates. Los Angeles' Lincoln High feels its program is special because of the individual counseling and services provided. Portland states that its program is special because of its networking both within, and outside of, the school district and its concept of Student Services Centers.

STAFF SURVEY

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What is your job title?

While all program staff work to raise attendance levels and improve attendance patterns of students, their functions vary widely. Some are teachers, others are social workers, guidance consultants and counselors. Several are facilitators and one is an instructional strategist.

2. How long have you been in this job?

Two staff members have been in their positions for more than 10 years, the rest for under five. The majority (8) has worked for less than two years in dropout prevention.

3. How much of your time is spent on the following functions?

(This category includes the following functions: counseling, program coordination, teaching, home visits, outreach to parents. There was also the category of "other".)

Responses to this question vary widely. Twelve provide counseling to students of whom seven spend between 26 and 50% providing that service. Twelve engage in program coordination and their time spent doing this varies from 0-15% to 75-100%. Nine teach, but only two spend more than 15% of their time at it. Nine make home visits but six spend more than 15% of their time engaged in that function. Thirteen spend time in outreach to

parents: four spend 15% or less of their time doing it, five spend between 16% and 25% of their time at it, three spend between 26 and 50% of their time at it and one engages in that activity between 51 and 75% of the time.

4. How many students are you working with?

Of the 15 respondents, one works with fewer than 26 students while nine work with more than 100.

5. How many hours/week do you spend meeting with students?

Five respondents meet with students fewer than 10 hours each week, four between 11 and 20 hours per week and five more than 20 hours per week.

6. Are there some targeted students for whom the program does not work?

Twelve respondents believe there are some targeted students for whom the program does not work. Two believe the program works for everyone.

7. If yes, why do you think the program does not work for them?

Reasons mentioned include: lack of support from other institutions such as the courts, the probation department and social service agencies; targeted students need to experience more success through incentive programs to increase motivation; the program is not structured to deal with issues of special education; there is a lack of participation or follow through on individual progress plans by parents; the social service issues are greater than the program can address (e.g., drugs, parenting, housing); there is no

cooperation from the parents or families; attendance patterns are already set in these students; they have so many problems that school services are not enough, they need highly concentrated counseling, gang pressure is so strong and runaways so prevalent; the population is highly mobile so there is a lack of support to stay in school and, therefore, less contact; there is some emotional disturbance, health and dental problems and severe drug and alcohol problems.

III. PRACTICES

8. What methods do you use to get students to come to school?

The respondents use many different methods. All staff members use the telephone to reach parents when their child is out of school. All also visit the home and use incentives to get students to come to school. Only three use the police and only one involves a state agency.

9. Complete the following: "After ___absences my school takes the following action":.

The answers to this question varied. Nine staff members call the home after only one absence, but all respondents call the home after five absences. Seven visit the home before five absences have occurred, one after seven and one after 16. One school gives detention and five respondents contact the truant officer after one absence, three schools after five or fewer absences, one after 10 and one after 20.

10. Do you offer a system of incentives?

Twelve respondents say they offer a system of incentives, two do not.

11. What is rewarded? (check all that apply)

Of the respondents, 13 reward attendance, 12 reward grades, seven punctuality, five attendance at counseling sessions, two reward improvement (emotional, social and behaviorial) and one rewards attendance after school.

12. What kinds of rewards are given out?

The respondents use a wide variety of rewards to promote success among their targeted students: certificates, games and toys, trips, movies, food, parties, educational supplies, help to get into a new program and privileges.

13. How often are rewards given out? (check all that apply)

Rewards are given out over specific periods of time and, again, each school/district has its own timetable for distributing incentives. Most, however, give them out on a quarterly or monthly basis.

14. Have you developed any special techniques that you believe are effective?

Thirteen of the respondents have developed special techniques that they believe are effective in dealing with at risk students and one has not.

15. If yes, please describe them.

Responses include: a continuous counseling relationship; programmed material at the level of the particular student; students compete against each other for monetary rewards; contests for trips that last for two to three weeks; visits to classrooms to observe behavior that will be helpful in counseling sessions; wake-up calls to foster punctuality and attendance; positive reinforcement; special relationships; personal, individual conferences; calls to the home to gain the students' confidence; awards and parties, and in-class workshops to discuss specific at risk issues and group sessions on counseling issues.

IV. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

16. Comment on this statement: "Parental involvement is very important to the program's success".

Twelve strongly agree while three agree somewhat.

17. What kinds of parental involvement activities are there in your program?

Of the activities mentioned, workshops are the most popular. Others include trips, tutoring, home visits and other types of personal contact, chaperoned activities, volunteer activities, rewarding parents and counseling.

18. Do you find it difficult to get parents, in general, involved in school activities?

Eleven said yes and three no.

19. Do you find it more difficult getting parents of students in the program involved in school activities than getting parents, in general, involved?

Eight respondents believe that it is more to somewhat difficult, three that there is no difference and two that it is actually less difficult.

20. Why do you think that is so?

Responses to this question include; parents need close, personal contact; the length of time that students stay in the program is too short, parents lack motivation, don't supervise the child, are too involved with drugs, alcohol or illness; the lack of interest in education is passed on from generation to generation; many are single parents who have no child care available to them; parents know that the child is receiving special attention at home and this promotes a laxity of responsibility; many parents have few parenting skills, and; some perceive any involvement as dangerous.

21. What methods could be used to increase parental involvement with the program?

The respondents believe that many different methods could be used. Methods mentioned were workshops, family services, dinners and entertainment, trips, parenting and adult education classes, health and employment referrals, and support groups.

V. PROGRAM EVALUATION

22. Comment on this statement: "The program has improved students' attendance".

Ten strongly agree that it has, five agree somewhat and one has no opinion.

23. What are the three components of the program that are most effective at improving attendance? (Indicate 1,2,3 next to your choices, where 1 = most effective)*

Counseling was the program component selected most often, followed by parental involvement and home visits. It is interesting to note that parental involvement, a component of every program, was thought to be difficult to achieve: it is considered by ten of the respondents to be one of the three most effective components at improving attendance.

*Several of the respondents did not list their choices in terms of first, second and third most effective components. Therefore, I have not examined the data in those terms.

24. What incentives, if any are used in you program?

The incentives seem almost uniform; most use trips, prizes and food as incentives to increase attendance. Also used are praise and privileges.

25. How long does it usually take before you can see program-induced improvements in student attendance?

All respondents said they can see improvements as a result of their programs within one year; nine said they could see improvements in less than six months. One said the question was not applicable.

26. Do changes need to be made in your school's program?

Of the respondents, 10 said yes, and three said no.

27. If yes, what kind of changes?

Most respondents said that there should be more staff training and more contact with parents. It is interesting to note that only four of the fifteen said that their schools need to expand their criteria to include more at risk students.

28. Should the program be expanded in your school?

Eight of the respondents agreed that the programs in their schools should be expanded, two said no and four said they did not know.

29. If yes, what would it include that it does not now?

There were a wide variety of responses to this question. The most frequent was business alliances, followed by smaller classes and parental

involvement. All other suggestions received four or fewer responses.

30. How would you rate this program in terms of its effect on improving students' attendance?

Of the respondents, 14 believe their programs to be good to excellent and one rates the program as fair.

31. Comment on this statement: "The program has improved students' academic performance".

Four agree strongly, 10 agree somewhat and one has no opinion.

32. On what do you base that conclusion?

The majority of the respondents (14) said they use class grades as one criterion. Six use teacher evaluations, five use feedback from students, three use standardized test scores and three use other means to justify their answer to question #31.

33. What improvements would you like to see in your program?

Many programs have very similar suggestions to improve to their programs: increased staffing and services at more sites; working with businesses to hire students and more after-school activities; more time with students and longer funding periods; more involvement with the parents and with the teachers of the program's students.

34. Do you think it is possible to reduce the dropout rate by increasing certain services that students receive?

Of the respondents, 12 said yes, two said no and one didn't know.

35. If yes, what kind of services?

Suggestions were made to improve services by increasing: counseling services, outreach, school-within-school programs, tracking of targeted students, summer bridge programs from the eighth to ninth grades, early and prompt testing of student, parenting classes, assignment of social workers to each site, individual services, health and dental care and cooperation with outside agencies.

36. How would you rate the attitude of the school staff towards the program?

All but one of the respondents stated that the attitude of their school's staff is cooperative to extremely cooperative. One school said the attitude is uncooperative.

37. What makes your program special?

The respondents, for the most part, felt that the staff of their programs make the program special. They are perceived as committed and dedicated advocates for children. Other reasons include: working with a population

that is hard to reach (suspended, expelled, truant, police pick-ups), giving them another option in securing help with academic and social problems. Other reasons are the individual contact and personal attention that the students receive.

STUDENT SURVEY

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. How old are you?

The students range in age from 9 to 18 years. The median age is 11.5 years.

2. How would you describe your race?

Of the 46 students surveyed, 18 are Black, 23 Hispanic, one White and four categorized themselves as "Other". Neither San Francisco nor Los Angeles had Black respondents. Whether this correlates to the larger population in the school districts or in the particular schools where the surveys were done is unclear. New Orleans had only Black respondents, but that is because their program's emphasis is on Black males.

3. What grade are you in?

Student grades ranged from the fourth to twelfth, with most in the ninth (14) and tenth (seven) grades.

4. What language is spoken in your home?

English is spoken exclusively in 22 households, Spanish and English in 14, Spanish only in six and other languages exclusively in two.

5. Did your parents graduate from high school?

Twenty students (44%) reported that their parents graduated from high school. Of the 20, 12 are Black, 6 Hispanic and one "Other".

6. Did your parents graduate from college?

Five (11%) students reported that their parents are college graduates. Examining the respondents by race, four are Black and one is Hispanic.

7. Were you ever left back or held over in a grade?

Twenty-five (54%) have been held over at least one time. Of those 25, 13 are black, 10 are Hispanic, one is White and one is "Other". The number of holdovers increases in the eighth and ninth grades and then drops by more than one-half in tenth grade.

8. If yes, how many times?

Seventeen students have been held over once and six have been heldover more than once.

II. ATTENDANCE

9. What are the three biggest reasons you are absent from school?

The three biggest reasons given are illness, appointments and oversleeping. The responses were tracked by race, age and grade.

In terms of race, only the Black respondents stated that they missed school because of fighting, suspension of going to court. Only the Hispanic students are absent to stay with their mother. Six Hispanics miss school due to appointments of various kinds while one Black and one "Other" do.

In terms of age, the majority of excuses for being out of school come from the 15 year old students, also the greatest variety of excuses and definitely the most illness of all the ages surveyed. The 16 year olds have almost the same number of illnesses but lack the range of excuses that the 15 year olds employ.

Tracking reasons for absence by grade; the most absences for illness, appointments and oversleeping cluster in the middle grades, 7th-10th.

10. Are there any class activities you hate to miss?

Of those responding, 27 said yes and 18 said no.

11a. If yes [to #10], which ones?

Among the classes that students said they hated to miss were: gym (9), Social Studies (5), computer and word processing (5) and Math (3). Of the other classes listed, five were academic, one was music, one shop, one was cooking and one was assemblies (shows and speeches).

This question was examined in terms of race, age and grade and no data was found to indicate any trends in this area.

11b. Why do you hate to miss that class/activity?

This question was tracked by race, grade and age. Six Hispanics and three Blacks as well as one White and one "Other" said they hate to miss a class with a good teacher. 14 Hispanics said they hate to miss an interesting class, while one Black and one White said this. Four Blacks said that they

hate to miss a class that they needed to graduate.

By age, while four 12 year olds hate to miss a class with a good teacher, with their friends and that are interesting, the majority of students who chose those answers were older (14-18). One 12 year old and one 13 year old hate to miss classes they need for graduation.

By grade, the sixth graders hate to miss a class if their friends are in it. Those who hate to miss interesting classes range from sixth through twelfth grades. One fifth grader and one sixth grader hate to miss a class that they need for graduation.

12. <u>Why do you cut class?</u>

This is a closed ended question; the students were given 20 options from which to choose and then asked to circle the most important reason for missing school.

This question was examined in terms of holdovers, race, age and grade.

While 11 holdovers stated that they cut class or school because they are ill, 15 (33%) said that they cut because they dislike a teacher. Other answers given by five or more students who have been heldover are that they don't like school, they are not interested in school and that school is too hard.

By race, more Hispanics (6) than Blacks (3) feel that school is too hard and six Hispanics and one white cut school because they are failing. Ten Black

respondents said they miss school or cut a class because they dislike a teacher while five Hispanic said they missed school for that reason. And four Hispanics and one Black cut class or school because their friends are not in school.

By age, the older respondents, especially the 15 and 16 year olds miss school or cut classes because they are failing, dislike a teacher or dislike a subject.

By grade, those respondents who miss school because they do not like a teacher are between fourth and ninth grades, while those who cut because they dislike a subject are between ninth and twelfth grades.

III. ATTENDANCE PROGRAM

13. What are the best things about this program?

The 12 year olds and 15 year olds seem most enthusiastic in response to this question, especially in terms of being in the program with friends, having good teachers in their programs, getting help with their schoolwork, rewards and getting out of class. In addition, three of the four 18 year olds think that among the best things in the program are the rewards.

This question was examined by race, age and grade.

There was no indication of any trends by race.

By grade, the ninth graders were most enthusiastic about the best things in the program, especially getting help with their schoolwork.

14. What are the worst things about this program?

Most (13) of the students reported that one of the worst things about the program is that people call or visit their houses too often. In addition, eight felt that being made fun of for being in the program is one of the worst things about it, five believed that the prizes are not good and seven that they never get any of the prizes. Four reported that one of the worst things about being in the program is that it makes them feel different. Other responses included: the program is not long enough, that there are too many stairs to climb to get to the program, that they miss work, that program staff wrongfully accuse students of things and that the program is a waste of time. Five students said that there were no worst things about the programs.

This question was examined by race and age.

By race, only Hispanics (5) said that one of the worst things about the program is that being in the program makes them feel different.

By age, almost all of the respondents who felt that people call or visit my house too often were early adolescents (between 12 and 15 years of age), four students between nine and 12 said that being made fun of was one of the worst things about the program. Of the five who said that the prizes

are not good, two are 12, two are 15 and one is 16, and, of the seven who said they never get any of the prizes, are all between the ages of 15 and 18.

IV. HOME LIFE

15. Do your parents ever keep you out of school?

Nineteen (42%) of the students reported that their parents keep them out of school.

16. If yes, for what reasons?

Eight (18%) of those responding report that their parents keep them out of school to take care of siblings.

Other reasons given for being kept out of school by a parent include: to translate, do housework, help them work, keep them company and to go somewhere.

I examined this question by race, age and grade.

By race, no clear pattern emerged.

By age, the only pattern was that respondents between the ages of 11 and 15 said they were kept home to take care of siblings, which corresponded to grades five through nine.

17. Do you work now?

Ten students report that they work.

18. If yes, how many hours per week?

Of those responding "yes", three work less that five hours per week and four less than 10 hours per week. Only one student works more than 20 hours each week.

19. What job would you like to get?

There were a wide variety of responses to this question, from professional basketball player to social worker, singer to judge, astronomer, probation officer, firefighter and dental assistant. Eighteen respondents said they did not know what kind of job they would get.

20. Do you think the kind of job you want requires a high school diploma?

Of those responding, 83% state that the kind of jobs they would like to get requires a high school diploma. While eight of the 46 (17%) did not know what they wanted to do when they leave school, five (11%) believed that they would need a high school diploma to do it.

21. What would make you come to school more?

There were a wide variety of responses to this question. A number of students said they would come to school more if they could read better and learn more. Some felt that they would come to school if the teachers were not so hard or if there were better teachers or if the classes were more fun. Other responses included getting a tutor, less nagging about school or

work, shorter classes or fewer of them, if school were more fun, less boring. Some would attend more often if given the chance to socialize more. A number of students would come to school if they were paid. And one student would come to school more so that he/she could get out and get an education.

IV. B) SURVEY CHARTS

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

6. What was the dropout rate the year before the program was implemented?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. <10%		x					
2. 10% - 20%			x				x
3. 21% - 30%						x	
4. 31% - 40%							
5. > 40%							

7. What is the dropout rate now?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. <10%		x					
2. 10%- 20%			x				x
3. 21% - 30%	x					x	
4. 31% - 40%							
5. > 40%							

*The middle school coordinator in Los Angeles did not respond to this question.

**New York City Public Schools does not maintain a dropout rate below the high school level, but District 4 maintains an attendance rate for all its own junior high students. The attendance rate for the 1986-87 school year was 83.25% and the attendance rate for the 1987-1988 school year was 81.45%.

9. How many students were targeted for the program this year?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. <50							
2. 50-100							
3. 101-150	x					x	
4. >150		x	x	x	x		x

10. What grades does this program include?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. K-9				x			
2. K-12		x					x
3. 6-9					x		
4. 9-12	x					x	

11. What criteria do you use when targeting students for this program?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Absenteeism	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2. Punctuality	x				x		
3. Reading scores		x		x		x	x
4. Academic performance		x		x	x	x	x
5. Limited English Proficiency (LEP)				x			
6. Other							
a. behavior reports		x					
b. overage for grade				x			

12. How was staff for this program chosen?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Voluntarily				x	x		
2. Seniority							
3. Special competency	x	x	x	x		x	x
4. Other							

13. Do your think that any kind of special training is necessary for staff in this program?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Yes	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2. No							

14. If yes, what kind of training?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Individual counseling	x		x	x	x	x	
2. Group counseling			x	x	x	x	
3. Sensitivity training	x	x	x		x	x	x
4. Other							
a. behavior management		x					
b. classroom management		x					
c. teaming		x					
d. multidisciplinary		x					
e. instructional strategies to meet the needs of at risk students					x		
f. must speak Spanish						x	
g. drug and alcohol training							x

15. Does your school district provide training for program staff?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Yes	x		x	x	x	x	x
2. No		x					

17. What strategies to improve attendance are being tried in your school?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Peer counseling						x	x
2. Counseling	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
3. Tutoring	x		x	x	x	x	x
4. Home visits	x	x	x	x	x		x
5. Incentives		x	x	x	x	x	x
6. Parental involvement	x	x	x	x	x		x
7. Job training					x		x
8. Business alliances			x		x		
9. Detention	x	x					
10. Suspension					x	x	
11. Reporting truancy to police					x		
12. Reducing school size					x		
13. Mini-sc[illegible]s					x		
14. Big F[illegible]r/Sister programs					x	x	
15. Small[illegible] class size					x		
16. Independent study					x	x	
17. Other:							
mentoring			x				

18. Of the strategies checked in #17, which do you feel are the three most effective?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Counseling	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2. Tutoring						x	
3. Home visits	x		x	x			x
4. Incentives		x	x	x			
5. Parental involvement	x	x			x		
6. Peer counseling							x
7. Other:							
individualized instruction					x		

19. Of the strategies listed in #17, the ones listed as least effective are:

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Suspension		x			x	x	x
2. Detention	x	x				x	x
3. Parental involvement				x			x
4. Reporting truancy to police		x					
5. Tutoring	x						

20. If incentives are used in your program, what are they?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Awards/certificates		x		x	x	x	
2. Prizes		x	x	x	x	x	x
3. Trips		x		x			x
4. Food				x			x
5. Praise		x					
6. More time with a special staff person		x					

IV. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

21. Comment on this statement: "Parental involvement is very important to the program's success".

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Strongly agree	x		x		x	x	
2. Agree somewhat		x		x			x
3. No opinion							
4. Disagree somewhat							
5. Strongly disagree							

22. Approximately what percentage of parents with children in the program actively participate in the program?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. 0 -15%	x		x	x			
2. 15-25%		x					x
3. 25-50%							
4. 50-75%						x	
5. 75-100%					x		

23. Do you find it difficult to get parents, in general, involved in school activities?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Yes	x		x	x	x	x	x
2. No							

24. Do you find it more difficult getting parents of students in the program involved in school activities than getting parents in general involved?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. More difficult	x		x	x		x	x
2. The same					x		
3. Less difficult		x					

25. Why do you think that is?

	SF	NO*	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Parents lack interest	x		x		x		
2. Language difficulty	x						x
3. Conflicts with job	x				x	x	
4. Other:							
a. fear of school as an official institution					x		
b. overwhelming demands of poverty				x			
c. dependency/addiction				x			
d. mobility							x
e. dysfunction							x

* New Orleans responded that parents are desperate to help their children and so will participate in what is offered to them, depending on what is offered to them.

26. What kinds of parental involvement activities are included in your program?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Trips		x		x			
2. Workshops	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
3. Tutoring		x					
4. None							
5. Other							
a. home visits			x				
b. weekly progress reports					x		
c. monthly newsletter						X	
d. parent support groups				x			
e. networking with other parents		x					
f. short-term employment		x					
g. Incentives to work with children on academic problems		x					
h. role models for other parents			x				
i. support group facilitators		x					

27. What methods could be used get more parents involved?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Workshops	x		x		x	x	
2. Family/parent services			x	x	x	x	x
3. Luncheons	x		x	x	x	x	x
4. Trips				x	x		x
5. Entertainment	x			x	x		x
6. Parenting classes	x			x	x		x
7. Adult education classes			x		x		
8. Health services referrals					x		x
9. Employment referrals		x			x	x	

V. Program Evaluation

28. Comment on this statement: "The program has improved students' attendance".

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Strongly agree			x		x		
2. Agree somewhat	x	x		x		x	x
3. No opinion							
4. Disagree somewhat							
5. Strongly disagree							

29. How long does it take before you see program-induced improvements in student attendance?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. < 6 mos.				x	x		
2. 6 mos. - 1 year	x	x	x				
3. 1 year - 2 years							
4. > 2 years						x	x
5. Not applicable							
6. Don't know							

30. Do changes need to be made in your school's program?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Yes	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2. No							

31. If yes, what kind of changes?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Expand criteria of an "at risk" student					x		
2. More staff training	x	x	x	x		x	
3. Smaller staff to student ratio		x	x	x		x	x
4. More incentives	x		x				
5. Better incentives							
6. More contact with parents	x	x	x	x		x	x
7. More interaction with students/teachers	x	x				x	x
8. Other:							
a. peer counseling				x			
b. more diverse curriculum/ academic opportunities for students		x					

32. Should the program be expanded in your school?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Yes	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2. No							

33. If yes, what would it include that it does not now?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Peer counseling	x	x		x			
2. Counseling	x		x				
3. Tutoring	x		x				
4. Home visits	x		x				
5. Incentives	x		x				
6. Parental involvement	x		x				
7. Job training	x	x					x
8. Business alliances	x	x	x				x
9. Detention							
10. Suspension							
11. Reporting truancy to police							
12. Reducing school size	x	x					
13. Mini-schools		x					
14. Big Brother/Sister Programs							
15. Smaller class size		x					
16. Independent study	x						
17. Other:							
a. increased staff capability to deal with family							x
b. increased collaboration with family agencies							x
c. mentoring			x				

34. How would you rate this program in terms of its effect on improving student attendance?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Excellent			x		x		
2. Very good				x		x	x
3. No opinion							
4. Fair	x	x					
5. Poor							

35. Comment on this statement: "The program has improved students' academic performance".

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Strongly agree					x		
2. Agree somewhat	x	x	x			x	
3. No opinion				x			
4. Disagree somewhat							
5. Strongly disagree							

36. On what do you base that conclusion?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Standardized test scores			x		x		
2. Class grades	x	x	x		x	x	
3. Teacher evaluations		x	x		x		
4. Feedback from students		x			x		
5. Other							

38. Do you think the school can effectively reduce the dropout rate on its own?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Yes		x			x	x	
2. No	x		x	x			

39. Does the school need to work on this problem with other groups or agencies?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Yes	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2. No							

40. If yes, which groups?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Business		x	x	x	x	x	x
2. Police	x	x	x	x	x	x	
3. Courts	x	x	x	x	x		x
4. Social service agencies		x	x	x	x		x
5. Legislature		x	x	x	x		x
6. Other:							
a. parents					x		x
b. community					x		

41. How would you rate the attitudes of the school staff toward the program?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LAm	LAh	P
1. Extremely cooperative			x	x			x
2. Cooperative					x	x	
3. No opinion							
4. Somewhat cooperative	x	x					
5. Extremely uncooperative							

STAFF SURVEY

[Note: No staff member from the Los Angeles Junior High School Student Assistance Program participated in this survey.]

2. How long have you been in this job?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Less than one year		1	1			
2. One to two years	1	2		2		3
3. Two to five years	1		1	1		
4. Five to ten years						
5. More than ten years	1				1	

3. How much of you time is spent on the following functions? (check all that apply) *

[Note: numbers in the responses to this question refer to a particular staff member and are used solely to track that staff member's time spent on certain functions.]

San Francisco:

	0-15%	16-25%	26-50%	51-75%	75-100%
Counseling	2	1,3			
Program coordination	1			2	
Teaching	2		1		
Home visits	2				
Outreach to parents	1,2	3			
Other:					
student study team			3		

New Orleans:

	0-15%	16-25%	26-50%	51-75%	75-100%
Counseling			2,3		
Program coordination		3	1		
Teaching	3			1	
Home visits	2,3				
Outreach to parents	2	3	1		
Other:					
Community resources and clerical	2				

* Los Angeles, Lincoln High School staff member did not respond to this question.

Chicago:

	0-15%	16-25%	26-50%	51-75%	75-100%
Counseling				1	2
Program coordination	2			1	
Teaching	1				
Home visits			1	2	
Outreach to parents			1	2	
Other					

District 4, New York City:

	0-15%	16-25%	26-50%	51-75%	75-100%
Counseling	2		1		
Program coordination				1,2	3
Teaching	1				
Home visits	1				
Outreach to parents		1,3	2		
Other					

Portland:

	0-15%	16-25%	26-50%	51-75%	75-100%
Counseling			1,2,3		
Program coordination		1,3			
Teaching	2,3				
Home visits	2,3	1			
Outreach to parents	2	3			
Other:					
groups		3			
staff training	1				
clerical		2			

4. How many students are you working with?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. <10						
2. 10-25	1					
3. 26-50		1	1			
4. 51-75						1
5. 76-100		1		1		1
6. 101-150	1	1		1		1
7. >150	1			2	1	1

5. How many hours/week do you spend meeting with students?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. <5		1		1		
2. 5-10	1			1	1	
3. 11-20	2		1			1
4. >20		2	1			2

6. Are there some targeted students for whom the program does not work?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Yes	1	3	1	3	1	3
2. No	2					
3. Don't know			1			

8. What methods do you use to get students to come to school?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Incentives		3	2	3	1	3
2. Calls to parents	3	3	2	3	1	3
3. Truant officers		1	2	1	1	3
4. Police	1		1	1		
5. Home visits	2	2	2	3	1	3
6. Other						
Special Services for Children (a State agency)				1		

9. Complete the following: "After ___ absences my school takes the following action":

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Call parents	1,1,1	5,3,5	1,5	1,1,1	1	1,3
2. Home visit		7	3,5	1,1,1	5	16,5
3. Detention					1	
4. Suspension						
5. Contact truant officer		4	3,20		5	10

10. Do you offer a system of incentives?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Yes	2	3	1	3		3
2. No	1		1			

11. What is rewarded?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Attendance	1	3	2	3	1	3
2. Punctuality	1	2	1	2		1
3. Grades	2	3		3	1	3
4. Attendance at counseling sessions		1	1	1		2
5. Other:						
a. improved emotional, social and behavioral skills		1				
b. after-school attendance				1		
c. degrees of improvement						1

12. What kinds of rewards are given? (check all that apply)

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Certificates		3	2	3	1	2
2. Toys/games			2	3		1
3. Trips		3	1	3		2
4. Movies		2		3	1	1
5. Food		2	2	2	1	3
6. Parties		1	1	1	1	2
7. Other:						
a. educational supplies			1			
b. assistance to get into new program	1					
c. privileges						1

13. How often are rewards given out? (check all that apply)

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Weekly		1			1	2
2. Monthly		2	1	2	1	1
3. Quarterly		3		2	1	2
4. Biannually		1		1	1	1
5. Per contract	1	1				1
6. Other:						
a. as deemed necessary			1			
b. bimonthly			1			
c. on a sliding scale as behavior improves		1				
d. when they leave the center	1					
e. daily						1
f. annually						1

14. Have you developed any special techniques that you believe are effective?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Yes	2	3	2	2	1	3
2. No	1					

16. Comment on this statement: "Parental involvement is very important to the program's success".

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Strongly agree	2	3	2	3	1	1
2. Agree somewhat	1					2
3. No opinion						
4. Disagree somewhat						
5. Strongly disagree						

17. What kinds of parental involvement activities are there in your program?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Trips				1		1
2. Workshops		3	1	3		2
3. Tutoring		1	1			1
4. Other:						
a. personal contact, meetings home visits						1
b. chaperoning activities						1
c. home contacts and conferences			1			
d. phone calls		1				
e. volunteer activities		1				
f. rewarding parents				1		
g. counseling				1		

18. Do you find it difficult to get parents, in general, involved in school activities?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Yes		3	1	3	1	3
2. No	2		1			

19. Do you find it more difficult getting parents of students in the program involved in school activities than getting parents, in general, involved?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. More difficult			1	1		3
2. Somewhat difficult		2		1		
3. The same	1	1	1			
4. Less difficult				1	1	

21. What methods could be used to increase parent involvement with the program?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Workshops	1	2	1	3		1
2. Family/Parent services	2	2	2	1		3
3. Dinners	1	3	1			3
4. Trips		1	1	2	1	
5. Entertainment		2		2		2
6. Parenting classes	1	1	2	1		
7 Adult education		1	2	2		
8. Health services referrals	1	1	1			2
9. Employment referrals	1	1	1			1
10. Other:						
support groups						1

22. Comment on the statement: "The program has improved students' attendance."

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Strongly agree	2	2	2	1	1	2
2. Agree somewhat		1		2		1
3. No opinion	1					
4. Disagree somewhat						
5. Strongly disagree						

23. <u>What are the three components of the program that are most effective at improving attendance? (Indicate 1,2,3 next to your choices, where 1 = most effective)</u>

[Note: there was not a complete response to this question in that many of the respondents did not list their first, second and third choices of effective components. The numbers refer to the number of staff members from a particular school/district who responded to a particular question.]

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Peer Counseling				3	1	
2. Counseling	3	2	2		1	2
3. Tutoring	1	2			1	
4. Home visits	2	1	2	3		
5. Incentives		1		2		
6. Parental involvement	2	2	2	1		2
7. Job training		1				
8. Business alliances						
9. Detention						
10. Suspension						
11. Reported extended truancy to police						
12. Reducing school size						
13. Mini-schools						
14. Big Brother/Sister Programs						
15. Smaller classes	1	1				
16. Independent study	1					
17. Other:						
a. no course credit for low attendance						1
b. same day calls to follow-up on absences						1
c. good rapport with students	1					

25. How long does it take before you can see program-induced improvements in student attendance?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. <6 months	1	2	1	2	1	2
2. 6 months to 1 year	1	1	1	1		1
3. 1 year to 2 years						
4. >2 years						
5. Not applicable	1					
6. Don't know						

26. Do changes need to be made in your school's program?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Yes	1	3	1	2	1	2
2. No	2			1		

27. If yes, what kind of changes?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Expand criteria to include more "at risk" students	1	2				1
2. More staff training	1	2	2	1		2
3. Smaller staff to student ratio	1	2				2
4. More incentives		2				2
5. Better incentives	2			1		2
6. More contact with parents	1	1		2		3
7. More interaction with students' teachers		2	1	2		
8. Other:						
a. schools within schools	1					
b.more contact with community agencies		1				
c. food, clothing drives				1		
d. increased community involvement						1

28. Should the program be expanded in your school?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Yes		2	1	2		3
2. No	1	2				
3. Don't know	1		1	1	1	

29. If yes, what would it include that it does not now?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Peer Counseling	1					2
2. Counseling	1			1		1
3. Tutoring	1		1	1		1
4. Home visits	1			1		2
5. Incentives				1		1
6. Parental involvement	1			1		3
7. Job training	1	1		1		1
8. Business alliances	1	1		1		3
9. Detention						
10. Suspension						
11. Reported extended truancy to police	1		1			
12. Reducing school size	1			1		1
13. Mini-schools	1					1
14. Big Brother/Sister Programs	1			1		2
15. Smaller classes	1	2		1		1
16. Independent study		1		1		
17. Other:						
a. more TAP workers			1			
b. pre-/post behavioral evaluation scores		1				
c. special classes for long-term absentees to get them back into the mainstream				1		
d. restructuring the grading system to be consistent						1
e. not grade homework						1

30. How would you rate this program in terms of its effect on improving student attendance?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Excellent	1	2			1	
2. Very good	2	3		2		3
3. No opinion						
4. Fair				1		
5. Poor						

31. Comment on this statement: "The program has improved students' academic performance".

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Strongly agree	1		1	1	1	
2. Agree somewhat	2	3	1	1		3
3. No opinion				1		
4. Disagree somewhat						
5. Strongly disagree						

32. On what do you base that conclusion?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Standardized test scores		1		1		1
2. Class grades	3	3	2	2	1	3
3. Teacher evaluations	1	1	2	1		1
4. Feedback from students	1	2	1	1		
5. Other:						
a. feedback from parents		1				
b. district data						1

34. Do you think it is possible to reduce the dropout rate by increasing the number of services that students receive?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Yes	3	2	2	2	1	2
2. No		2				1
3. Don't know				1		

36. How would you rate the attitude of the school staff towards the program?

	SF	NO	CHI	NYC	LA	P
1. Extremely cooperative	1				1	1
2. Cooperative	2	2	1	3	1	
3. No opinion						
4. Uncooperative		1				
5. Extremely uncooperative						

STUDENT SURVEY

[Note: Neither students from the Portland Public Schools nor the Los Angeles Middle Schools participated in this survey.]

1. How old are you?

AGE	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	1	1	1	9	3	6	13	6	2	4

2. How would you describe your race?

1. Black	17
2. White	1
3. Asian	
4. Hispanic	23
5. Black Caribbean	1
6. American Indian	
7. Other	4

3. What grade are you in?

GRADE	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	1	2	5	6	5	14	7		5

4. What language is spoken in your home?

English	22
Spanish	6
Spanish/English	14
Other	2

5. Did your parents graduate from high school?

1. Yes	20
2. No	13
3. Don't know	12

5. By race: (Parents who graduated from high school)

Black	Hispanic	White	Other
12	6		2

6. Did your parents graduate from college?

1. Yes	5
2. No	21
3. Don't know	20

6. By race: (parents who graduated from college)

Black	Hispanic	White	Other
4	1		

7. Have you ever been left back or held over a grade?

1. Yes	25
2. No	21

8. If yes, how many times?

1. One time	17
2. Two times	6

II. ATTENDANCE

9. What are the three biggest reasons you are absent form school?
By race:

Other	Black	Hispanic	White	
Suspension	3			
Fighting	1			
Go to court	2			
Don't like school	2	2		
Afraid			1	
Illness	15	17	1	1
Appointment	1	6		1
Oversleep	1	5		1
Traffic delays		2		1
No clothes	1			1
Late	1			
Stay with mother		3		
Taking care of others	2			
Tired	1			
With friends		1		
Problems	1	3		
Do not want to go to school	1	3		
Always in trouble	1			
School is too hard		1		
School is boring				1
Nerves			1	
When I don't do the work				1
Lazy		2		
Emergency		1		
Out of town		1		
Stay home		2		

9. By age:

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Suspension				3						
Fighting				1				1		
Go to court				1						
Don't like school				1		3				
Afraid				1						
Illness	1	1	1	4	1	3	8	5	1	3
Appointment	1	1	1	1		2	2	1		2
Oversleep				1	1	2	3			1
Traffic delays				1		2	1	1		
No clothes					1		1			
Late		1					2			
Stay with mother								1		
Taking care of others	1		1							
Tired								1		
With friends						1				
Problems					2		1			1
Do not want to go to school					1	1	1	1		
Always in trouble							1			
School is too hard							1			
School is boring							1			
Nerves				1						
When I don't do the work							1.			
Lazy							1			1
Emergency										1
Out of town									1	
Stay home						2	2			

9. **By grade:**

	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Suspension		1	2						
Fighting		1							
Go to court		1				1			
Don't like school				2		2			
Afraid			1						
Illness	2	1	4	1	4	7	6		3
Appointment	2	1		1	1	3	1		2
Oversleep				2	2	2	1		1
Traffic delays				1		1	1		
No clothes				1		1			
Late	1								
Stay with mother						2	1		
Taking care of others	1	1							
Tired							1		
With friends						1			
Problems					3	1			1
Do not want to go to school					1	1	2		
Always in trouble						1			
School is too hard						1			
School is boring						1			
Nerves		1							
When I don't do the work						1			
Lazy							1		1
Emergency									1
Out of town							1		
Stay home						3			

10. Are there any class activities you hate to miss?

1. Yes	27
2. No	18

11a. If yes, which ones?
By race:

Other	Black	Hispanic	White	
Gym	5	4		
Music/Art		1		
Reading		1		
Science		2		
Computer Lab		2	1	1
Social Studies	3	2		
Shop	1	1		
Math	2	1		
English		1		
Shows/Speeches		1		
Cooking				1
Word Processing		1		
Economics		1		
Chemistry		1		
Speech		1		

11. By Age:

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Gym				2			4	3		
Music				1						
Reading				1						
Science				1		1				
Computer				1		1	1	1		
Social Studies				3	1			1		
Shop						1	1			
Math							1	2		
English							1			
Shows/Speeches							1			
Cooking							1			
Word Processing									1	
Economics										1
Chemistry										1
Speech										1

11. By grade:

	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Gym		1	1			5	2		
Music				1					
Reading				1					
Science				1	1				
Computer			1			3			
Social Studies				1			1		
Shop					2				
Math					1	1	1		
English					1				
Shows/Speeches						1			
Cooking						1			
Word Processing									1
Economics									1
Chemistry									1
Speech									1

11b. Why do you hate to miss that class/activity?
By race:

	Black	Hispanic	White	Other
Good teacher	3	6	1	1
With friends	4	2	1	
Interesting	1	14	1	
Need to graduate	4			
Other:				
a. like to play	1			
b. feel good/safe			1	
c. get help			1	

11b. By Age:

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Good teacher				4		1	1	2	1	2
With friends				4			1	1		1
Interesting				4		3	5	3	1	2
Need to graduate				1	1				1	
Other:										
a. like to play								1		
b. feel good/safe							1			
c. get help							1			

11b. By grade:

	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Good teacher		1	2	1	1	2	1		3
With friends		1	3			1	1		1
Interesting			2	2	2	7	2		3
Need to graduate		1	1			1	1		
Other:									
a. like to play						1			
b. feel good/safe						1			
c. get help							1		

12. Why do you cut class?
By race:

	Black	Hispanic	White	Other
do not like school	5	7	1	2
can learn more out of school				
not interested in school	5	5		
school is too hard	3	6		
failing		6	1	
dislike a teacher	10	5		1
dislike a subject	3	5		
need money to help at home				
dislike students	3	5	1	
prefer work to school				
school too dangerous				
need/want spending money				
problems with drugs/alcohol				
sickness	9	13	1	2
friends not in school	1	4		
suspended				
marriage				
parents want me home				
pregnancy				
do not know				

12. By age:

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
do not like school				1	2	3	3	3		2
can learn more out of school										
not interested in school				1		2	2	3	1	1
school is too hard					2	1	2	3	1	
failing				2			2	3		
dislike a teacher		1	1	3	3		3	4		2
dislike a subject					1	1	2	5		2
need money to help at home										
dislike students	1	1	1		1	1	1	2		1
prefer work to school										
school too dangerous										
need/want spending money										
problems with drugs/ alcohol										
sickness	1	1	1	3	1	3	8	3	2	2
friends not in school						1	2	2		
suspended										
marriage										
parents want me home										
pregnancy										
do not know										

12. By grade:

	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
do not like school		1	1	1	2	5			1	
can learn more out of school										
not interested in school		1		1	1	3	2			
school is too hard				1	3	2	2			
failing			1	1	2					
dislike a teacher	1	2	3	1	1	3				
dislike a subject						2	3	1		1
need money to help at home										
dislike students	2	1	1		1	2				
prefer work to school										
school too dangerous										
need/want spending money										
problems with drugs/ alcohol										
sickness	2	1	3	2	4	5	1		1	
friends not in school						2				
suspended										
marriage										
parents want me home										
pregnancy										
do not know										

12. By holdover:

do not like school	5	
can learn more out of school		
not interested in school	6	
school is too hard	5	
failing	3	
dislike a teacher	8	
dislike a subject	4	
need money to help at home		
dislike students	4	
prefer work to school		
school too dangerous	1	
need/want spending money		3
problems with drugs/alcohol		
sickness	11	
friends not in school	3	
suspended	3	
marriage		
parents want me home	1	
pregnancy		
do not know		

13. What are the best things about this program?

By age:

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Friends	1	1	1	4	2	2	7	3	1	2
Good teachers	1	1	1	3	1	2	6	1	1	2
Help with schoolwork		1	1	4		1	6	2	2	2
Get out of class			1	2	1	3	6	2		
Rewards	1	1	1	4	2	1	4	1	1	3

13. By grade:

	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Friends	2	2	2	2	1	6	3		4
Good teachers	2	2		4		6			3
Help with schoolwork	2	2	2	1	2	8	2		3
Get out of class		1	1	3	1	5	2		
Rewards	2	2	1	5		1	1		4

13. By race:

	Black	Hispanic	White	Other
Friends	9	12	1	3
Good teachers	9	9		3
Help with schoolwork	7	10		3
Get out of class	6	6		3
Rewards	9	9		1

14. What are the worst things about this program?

By race:

	Black	Hispanic	White	Other
People call or visit my house too often	5	5		1
Kids make fun of me for being in the program	3	4		
The prizes are not good	2	1		
I never get prizes	2	2		2
Being in the program makes me feel different		5		
Other:				
a. program is not long enough	1			
b. too many stairs	1			
c. miss work	1			
d. it's a waste of time		1		
e. wrongfully accuse people		1		
f. nothing	1	2	1	1

14. By age:

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
People call or visit my house too often				3	1	2	5			1
Kids make fun of me for being in the program	1	1	1	2			1	1		
The prizes are not good							2	1		
I never get prizes							3	1	1	1
Being in the program makes me feel different				1		1		3		
Other:										
a. not long enough				1						
b. too many stairs						1				
c. miss work		1								
d. it's a waste of time							1			
e. wrongfully accuse people							1			
f. nothing				3			1	1		

15. Do your parents keep you out of school?
By race:

	Black	Hispanic	White	Other
To help with siblings	4	1		2
To translate		2		
To do housework	1			1
To keep them company	1			1
To help them work	2	1		
Other:				
a. when sick	4	2		
b. in trouble with another student at school	1			
c. to go somewhere		2		

15. By age:

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
To help with siblings			1	2		1	2			1
To translate								2		
To do housework					1		1			
To keep them company							1	1		
To help them work		1	1					1		
Other:										
a. when sick	1	1	1			1	1	1		
b. in trouble with another student at school							1			
c. to go somewhere							1	1		

15. By grade:

	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
To help with siblings		1	1	2		2			1
To translate							2		
To do housework				1		1			
To keep them company						1	1		
To help them work	1	1					1		
Other:									
a. when sick	2	1			2		1		
b. in trouble with another student at school						1			
c. to go somewhere						1	1		

17. <u>Do you work now?</u>

1. Yes	10
2. No	34

18. <u>If yes, how many hours per week?</u>

1. Less than 5 hours	3
2. 5-10 hours	4
3. 11-15	
4. 16-20	
5. More than 20	1

V. CONCLUSION

Since 1956, the dropout rate in the United States has remained around twenty-five percent. In the past, agricultural and manufacturing jobs awaited those who dropped out. With fewer agricultural, manufacturing and other unskilled jobs available, our labor market cannot sustain a pool of unskilled workers, or provide them with a living wage. Since the Second World War, college enrollment has increased, as an increasing number of technical and service jobs require a college degree or high school diploma. To compete in this emerging service economy, job entrants find a high school diploma to be essential. The nation continues to be a melting pot of disparate cultures who discover, in their efforts to assimilate, that many of our institutions are not equipped to accommodate that which is different. We require the same degree or diploma of these cultures who are entering high school and college in unprecedented numbers. Whether they succeed will depend on talent, ambition, support and how well our schools are equipped to meet their needs.

Like differences of opinion, the definitions of the term dropout are plentiful and depend on a variety of unique factors for justification. Many school districts change their definitions to suit funding sources. Educators may write specifications for different programs and, as a result, place

different emphasis on similar characteristics. Of those responding to the survey, one district defines a dropout as one who does not attend school for one year, another district after 45 days, one district does not specify a period of nonattendance, but considers a dropout one who does not attend school regularly. Some definitions are quite extensive, others are terse. Some school districts list the characteristics of dropouts, while some define them by what they are not.

"At risk" is a relatively new term: some districts have yet to officially define the term. These differences in definition create differences in understanding. Study of the dropout problem is seriously hampered by disparate definitions: it cannot be investigated fully or measured reliably. Valid assessment would be impossible without it. I believe a standard definition must be created to describe of whom we speak and to address all those who need help. We must create a definition to meet student needs, not funding sources.

The coordinators believe (Coordinator Survey, question #28), that their programs improve attendance. However, the methods of judging the success of a program are not always uniform. Administrators and staff have a vested interest in the success of their programs. They appear to be dedicated professionals who want their students to stay in school. Very

often, people define their worth by their on the job performance. Those involved in a program may not be the best ones to tell us what, or whether, a program is successful. No program surveyed showed great improvement in the dropout rate from the year before their programs were implemented present. This may indicate no improvement, small (less than 10%) improvement or an increase in the dropout rate (up to 10%). Since the administrators all answered that their programs increased attendance, the margins of success must be incremental. If all the coordinators feel that they are successful, perhaps they are using criteria other than the dropout rate to define success. We might, therefore, examine what is considered successful in these programs and who determines that success. It is important to distinguish between a program that judges success by quantitative standards and one that uses affective development. Attendance figures may not be the only, or best, way to judge success. Further study might include tracking (separately) students in the program vs. a control group or the larger population and surveying program personnel on their methods of judging success.

When asked why the program does not work for certain participants (Teacher, Program Staff Survey, question #7), no staff respondents thought that the school had anything to do with a student's lack of success. When a similar question (Student Survey, question #12) was asked of students,

their responses were markedly different from the staff's responses. The students said that they missed school for various reasons: they dislike school, a teacher, a subject, they are failing, school is too hard. While it can be argued that the students have less sophisticated reasoning abilities than do staff members, it can also be argued that staff members rely too much on intellectual insights and do not spend enough time thinking like their students or speaking with them. In asking staff members what methods they use to get students to come to school more (Teacher/Program Staff Survey, question #8), not one mentioned more counseling or asking students why they are absent or what would make them come to school more. Eighty percent of the staff members responding said that, for varying reasons, the program does not work for everyone. Many of the students in these dropout prevention programs, despite many obstacles, actually do improve their attendance. Yet we must also focus on those students who cannot or have not overcome the obstacles of low self-esteem, indifferent families, poverty and lack of support from legal institutions and social service agencies. We must determine how they can be motivated to reenter the mainstream or see the value of remaining in school. This is an area that deserves further study.

The aspirations of the students surveyed are high as witnessed by the types of jobs they dream of: judge, lawyer, engineer, astronomer, police

officer, firefighter, veterinarian, dental assistant and computer technician, among others. That most students are aware that they need at least a high school diploma to achieve these goals is important to note because most of these students will have great difficulty realizing their dreams. How they chose these careers would be interesting to discover. There were, however, eighteen students who did not know if the jobs they desired required a high school diploma. Some who were unsure of their career goals felt that a high school diploma was necessary for their success. If career counseling were an integral part of the junior high and high school curriculum, students might make more realistic choices about their adult lives and avoid the frustration encountered in situations for which they are unprepared. If schools allowed students to experience different career opportunities while still in school, a more realistic career choice might result.

While the respondents feel their programs are successful in reducing the dropout rate, further success might be possible if outside agencies were used. Perhaps the schools need to consult with corporations to develop job-related training modules to motivate students in areas that they may want to pursue after high school: areas in which there will be projected strong employment. These working relationships with the business world might include job training as part of the regular

curriculum. In addition to making the curriculum more relevant, it could lead to employment, both while in school and after graduation. Labor unions might also provide a link to job training and placement.

Alliances with business for at risk students may be a unique opportunity for some students; being noticed and hired by a company for whom they apprentice during their school years may lead to an opportunity for a lasting career.

All administrators felt that their program improved students' attendance. The statistics provided by these administrators show, however, that any change in their programs has been incremental, at best. This raises the question of whether small improvements in attendance can be justified financially and politically. It also provokes us to wonder if, in fact, statistics are the best or only way to judge these programs. Dropout rates alone may not reveal the success of a program. It will be several years before we know the dropout rate for the students participating in these particular programs. Further study might include tracking students in the program or cohort studies of successive grades of students involved in these programs.

In addition to counseling skills, as suggested by the Los Angeles middle schools coordinator in question #14, training might include

instructional strategies specifically designed for at risk students. Keeping them in school is one side of a double-edged sword; keeping them interested and learning is the other.

Parental involvement introduces an interesting paradox: while two-thirds of the staff respondents believe that parental involvement is crucial to improve attendance, they also believe that getting parents of at risk students actively involved in their children's schools is difficult. While all respondents agreed that it is difficult to get parents, in general, involved in school activities, two reported that they have great success in this area. Both respondents are from the Los Angeles Unified School District, one is a middle school program and one from a high school. Both of these respondents report having more than 50% of the parents of their targeted students participating in their programs. Respondents note that however important parental involvement is, it is difficult to achieve. In fact, most of those responding state that their programs get fewer than 15% of parents of targeted students involved in school activities. Maybe our methods of enticing parents to become involved is the problem or perhaps our assumption that parental involvement is so important is wrong. If responses to this survey are an indication, the VIP program in Lincoln High School in Los Angeles does not show more success than other programs

even with 50-75% of parents of targeted students participating. Perhaps parents have less influence over their children than they had a generation ago. This warrants further study, as do the studies of how other cultures raise their children, and whether that creates more or fewer dropouts.

Respondents suggested a number of methods to increase parental involvement, including entertainment, workshops, support groups, classes and health and employment referrals. The school, then, could become a center of activity in a community; a place where information could be disseminated, classes could be taken, games played. It could be that campaigns, much like telethons or funding drives, should be launched to bring parents into the school and make the school a community place. Of the methods suggested to get more parents involved, I believe that family and parent services (such as day care) as well as health services and employment referrals could be offered. If the school becomes an integral part of the community, "parental involvement" might be less elusive a goal.

When students talk about the reasons they are kept out of school, the reason most often given is that they are needed to take care of siblings. This issue, then, is to either educate the parents on the importance of school or to make child care available. I think that two ways are possible:

first, the schools can form a partnership with a social service agency and, second, provide space in the schools along with training of students to provide that service.

If junior and senior high schools were to give credit to students for work in the community, schools could provide day care or baby sitting facilities to parents who attend school functions, work or attend school themselves. Parents who lack parenting skills could be enticed to join parenting groups in which those skills are discussed and practiced, especially with parent leaders from the community. The school needs to change its role in the community. At one time, it was isolated and self-sustaining; however, it must now adapt to changes in society to survive. Dewey remarked almost a century ago that "the school has become so set apart, so isolated from the ordinary conditions and motives of life that...it is the one place in the world where it is most difficult to get experience" (Dewey, p.41). Schools can no longer be satisfied with graduating three out of four students nor with the levels of achievement of graduates. One way to improve the school is to improve attitudes of students and parents towards school. The coordinator from New Orleans believes that parents are "desperate" to help their children and that they will participate in school activities depending on what is offered and the context in which it is presented to them. Searching for the proper context

in which to interest parents requires much thought and networking, but would lead to a rich source of information and ideas. How else, for example, could a program discover that in another city parents use their life skills, as well as their academic knowledge, to serve as tutors for children and role models for other adults in support groups? Networking, both within a school district and among other programs nationally could serve as a support network and idea exchange.

Aside from the more obvious problems like drug and alcohol dependence and unique geographical problems like constant moving of migrant workers, parents of targeted students may not be involved in their children's schools because of a lack of motivation, lack of child care arrangements, and fear of school as a government agency.

If the schools cooperated with state employment offices and created training or retraining facilities at public school sites, then parents and children could come to school together and support each other in the learning environment. Money spent on other projects could be used to finance job training efforts in conjunction with business and that money could be used as an incentive to persuade businesses to train and hire them in the same way that monies from the War on Poverty in the 1960's and 1970's was used to help pay salaries in On-the-Job training programs.

Whether any techniques exist to retain students in school is a matter that deserves further consideration.

Essential components to any dropout program are counseling services, which instill a sense of empowerment in students and special educational programs to give them the tools with which to achieve that empowerment.The programs surveyed provide counseling and educational services to any student who is identified as exhibiting attendance and/or behavioral problems. All those responding use counseling to attempt to change behavior in targeted students. The training (of those who are not guidance counselors and social workers) might consist of counseling techniques and strategies, not just individual or group counseling but family counseling as well. Often, there is more than one reason a student is at risk.

Staff can be trained in family counseling and made aware of outside agencies working towards the same goals. This training may be ongoing once staff members are functioning in their program capacities. It could be similar to recertification programs in which other professions participate and should be made as extensive as that reported in District 4.

Training could also include parental involvement techniques and strategies on how to conduct home visits as well as training for those students who will be peer tutors or counselors. Training might also include strategies for interacting with and enlisting support from teachers. Sensitivity and multicultural sensitivity training would be useful so that those entering the profession can empathize with those they will influence and become more sensitive, effective educators.

Respondents suggested that their programs would be improved through increased contact with parents, but they did not specify methods to increase parent involvement. This area requires further study.

Many schools experience "cultural confusion". Schools that are controlled by one culture must be sure that its values do not intrude on the diverse cultures of the student population. To achieve multicultural education educators must first learn about the cultures around them. Administrators and teachers would do well to study the language, habits and idiosyncrasies of those who they will teach.

Of the districts surveyed, most of the at risk staff was relatively new (less than four years) to their programs. Some programs were newly established, but it is important to understand the reason for staff turnover and develop strategies to keep dedicated staff functioning in these programs.

The number of young people who do not finish high school is alarming because that number has not diminished since the mid-1950's. At that time, it wasn't seen as failure to leaves school early; there were many opportunities for unskilled labor. School, as the institution responsible for generating literacy, is not living up to our expectations. It has lowered its standards and become satisfied with a mediocre product.

Some students in the survey are upset enough about their teachers, subjects or the fact that they are not doing well, to cut school. In addition to examining the student, we might do well to also examine teacher attitudes, staff support and the relevance of the school's curriculum. Perhaps the curriculum needs to be restructured to provide these at risk students with a variety of experiences, making use of out of school experiences, experiences that will engage the curiosity of the learner rather than teach according to the time frames, sequence, and book oriented way we do now. If so, teachers would have to function more as coaches than as autocrats.

Although regular attendance must precede any academic achievement, we must devise a curriculum that will keep these students in school once they have made the decision to return. It is clear that the school must accept at least some of the blame for the difficulties many students have in school.

We might try different types of instruction. Cooperative learning and group instruction provide shared experiences that facilitate learning. Allowing students to work in groups to solve problems that have significance to their lives makes the curriculum more challenging to students. The survey asked students if they hated to miss any classes. While 27 said yes, 18 said no, there were no classes that they hate to miss. Forty percent did not find anything interesting enough in their classes to make them want to attend school. This is a time when many educators arecalling for a restructuring of the schools. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's report, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century,* echoes the call of many educators: we must restructure our schools.

When asked why they cut class, the respondents gave a variety of reasons, including alienation and failure. One-third (15) of the students in the survey cut school because they dislike a teacher, which is disturbing.

If these programs are successful and begin to change the patterns of those at risk, what will the schools do to keep them there? If the students return to find the same classes with the same teachers that they cut school to avoid in the first place, or that they cannot get higher than a 60% on a math exam and they cannot graduate without math, it is unlikely that these students will opt to stay in school.

We must determine if the curriculum is relevant to students, especially those at risk. The schools must be willing to change the curriculum and methods of instruction. Some schools have begun to experiment with flexible scheduling of classes, assignments and length of school days. Students should not be so frustrated that dropping out seems an attractive alternative.

Perhaps those assessing their programs as "Fair" have expected better results or, in the case of San Francisco, since it is a newer program than the others, it is working to achieve that success.

Students were asked about the worst things in the program and their opinions reflected a strong age difference. Prizes, if a part of the program, must be geared to the age and grade of the recipient. In addition, all students must be given an opportunity to achieve a reward so they do not perceive the lack of reward as one more failure at school. There should be grades of awards so that the most improved students do not receive the same prize for their attendance as those students showing less improvement.

While there is some agreement on what is needed for a successful program, no conclusive criteria emerged. An evaluation that will show more conclusively the success or failure of these and other programs aimed at reducing the dropout rate is advisable.

Finally, and, I believe, most important for any dropout prevention and attendance improvement is that they begin in the elementary school years, if not earlier. This is the time when patterns of school attendance are formed. It is also the most opportune time to begin to work with parents and restructure their attitudes towards school, the time to get students used to the idea of success as it applies to them. Parents are more available to their children and the schools in these grades. To persuade young people of the value of school, we must start early.

Parents can become integral parts of the education process. For example, if the concept of shared decision making in a school based management program is to be successful, it must include parents. Empowering parents is one way to count on their participation.

Clearly, many further studies could provide valuable information of what makes students at risk: parental influence, business partnerships and curriculum design. By focusing our attention on the early grades, we may discover who is more likely to drop out and why school may or may not work for that student. Hopefully, we can intervene early enough in a young person's career to keep a child in school, have school be a successful and rewarding experience for that student and see that student emerge as a productive member of society.

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Appendix A:

Copy of Surveys

SURVEY OF PRINCIPAL/PROGRAM COORDINATOR

ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT/DROP-OUT PREVENTION PROGRAM

Please answer the following questions as they apply to you. Thank you.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What is your title?_____

2. How long have you been in this position?_____

3. How does your school define "dropout"?

_____

_____

_____

4. How does your school define an "at risk" student?

_____

_____

_____

5. Did you have an attendance or dropout prevention program last year?

___1. Yes

___2. No

6. What was the dropout rate the year before the program was implemented?

___1. <10%

___2. 10-20%

___3. 21-30%

___4. 31-40%

___5. >40%

7. What is the dropout rate now?

___1. <10%

___2. 10-20%

___3. 21-30%

___4. 31-40%

___5. >40%

8. How do you measure the dropout rate?

_____

_____

_____

9. How many students were targeted for the program this year?

___1. <50

___2. 50-100

___3. 101-150

___4. > 150

10. What grades does the program include?_____

11. What criteria do you use when targeting students for the program? (check all that apply)

___1. Absenteeism

___2. Punctuality

___3. Reading scores

___4. Academic performance

___5. Limited English proficiency

___6. Other (specify)_____

II. STAFFING

12. How was the staff for this program chosen?

___1. Voluntarily

___2. Seniority

___3. Special competency

___4. Other (specify) _____

13. Do you think that any kind of special training is necessary for staff in this program?

___1. Yes

___2. No

14. If yes, what kind of training? (Check all that apply)

___1. Individual counseling

___2. Group counseling

___3. Sensitivity training

___4. Other (specify) _____

15. Does your school district provide training for program staff?

___1. Yes

___2. No

16. If yes, what kind of training?

_____

_____

_____

III. INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

17. What strategies to improve attendance are being tried in your school?

___1. Peer counseling
___2. Counseling
___3. Tutoring
___4. Home visits
___5. Incentives
___6. Parental involvement
___7. Job training
___8. Business alliances
___9. Detention
___10. Suspension
___11. Reporting truancy to police
___12. Reducing school size
___13. Mini-schools
___14. Big Brother/Sister programs
___15. Smaller class size
___16. Independent study
___17. Other (specify) _____

18. Of the strategies checked in #17, which do you feel are the three most effective?:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

19. Of the strategies checked in #17, which are the three least effective?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

20. If incentives to improve attendance are used in your program, what are they?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

IV. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

21. Comment on this statement:"Parental involvement is very important to the program's success".

___1. Strongly agree

___2. Agree somewhat

___3. No opinion

___4. Disagree somewhat

___5. Strongly disagree

22. Approximately what percentage of parents with children in the program actively participate in the program?

___1. 0-15%

___2. 15-25%

___3. 25-50%

___4. 50-75%

___5. 75-100%

23. Do you find it difficult to get parents, in general, involved in school activities?

___1. Yes

___2. No

24. Do you find it more difficult getting parents of students in the program involved in school activities than getting parents in general involved?

___1. More difficult

___2. The same

___3. Less difficult

25. Why do you think that is?

___1. Parents lack interest

___2. Language difficulty

___3. Conflicts with job

___4. Other (specify) _____

26. What kinds of parental involvement activities are included in your program?

___1. Trips

___2. Workshops

___3. Tutoring

___4. None

___5. Other (specify) _____

27. What methods could be used to get more parents involved?(check all that apply)

___1. Workshops
___2. Family/parent services
___3. Luncheons
___4. Trips
___5. Entertainment
___6. Parenting classes
___7. Adult education classes
___8. Health services referrals
___9. Employment referrals
___10. Other (specify)

V. PROGRAM EVALUATION

28. Comment on this statement: "The program has improved students' attendance":

___1. Strongly agree

___2. Agree somewhat

___3. No opinion

___4. Disagree somewhat

___5. Strongly disagree

29. How long does it usually take before you see program-induced improvements in student attendance?

___1. < 6 mos.

___2. 6 mos - 1 year

___3. 1 year- 2 years

___4. > 2 years

___5. Not applicable

___6. Don't know

30. Do changes need to be made in your school's program?

___1. Yes

___2. No

31. If yes, what kind of changes?

___1. Expand criteria of an "at risk" student
___2. More staff training
___3. Smaller staff to student ratio
___4. More incentives
___5. Better incentives
___6. More contact with parents
___7. More interaction with students' teachers
___8. Other: (specify)

_____
_____
_____

32. Should the program be expanded in your school?

___1. Yes

___2. No

33. If yes, what would it include that it does not now?

___1. Peer counseling
___2. Counseling
___3. Tutoring
___4. Home visits
___5. Incentives
___6. Parental involvement
___7. Job training
___8. Business alliances
___9. Detention
___10. Suspension
___11. Reporting truancy to police
___12. Reducing school size
___13. Mini-schools
___14. Big Brother/Sister programs
___15. Smaller class size
___16. Independent study
___17. Other (specify) _____

34. How would you rate this program in terms of its effect on improving student attendance?

___1. Excellent

___2. Very good

___3. No opinion

___4. Fair

___5. Poor

35. Comment on this statement: "The program has improved students' academic performance".

___1. Strongly agree

___2. Agree somewhat

___3. No opinion

___4. Disagree somewhat

___5. Strongly disagree

36. On what do you base that conclusion?

___1. Standardized test scores

___2. Class grades

___3. Teacher evaluations

___4. Feedback from students

___5. Other (specify)_____

37. What improvements, if any, would you like to see in the program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

38. Do you think the school can effectively reduce the dropout rate on its own?

___1. Yes

___2. No

39. Does the school need to work on this problem with other groups or agencies?

___1. Yes

___2. No

40. If yes, which groups?

___1. Business

___2. Police

___3. Courts

___4. Social service agencies

___5. Legislature

___6. Other (specify) _____

41. How would you rate the attitudes of the school staff toward the program?

___1. Extremely cooperative

___2. Cooperative

___3. No opinion

___4. Somewhat cooperative

___5. Uncooperative

___6. Extremely uncooperative

42. What makes your program special?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SURVEY OF TEACHER/PROGRAM STAFF

ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT/DROP-OUT PREVENTION PROGRAM

Please answer the following questions as they apply to you. Thank you.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What is your job title?_____

2. How long have you been in this job?

___1. Less than one year

___2. One to two years

___3. Two to five years

___4. Five to ten years

___5. More than ten years

3. How much of your time is spent on the following functions? (check all that apply)

	0-15%	16-25%	26-50%	51-75%	75-100%
Counseling					
Program Coordination					
Teaching					
Home visits					
Outreach to parents					
Other (specify)					

4. How many students are you working with?

___1. <10

___2. 10-25

___3. 26-50

___4. 51-75

___5. 76-100

___6. 101-150

___7. >150

5. How many hours/week do you spend meeting with students?

___1. <5

___2. 5-10

___3. 11-20

___4. > 20

II. POLICIES

6. Are there some targeted students for whom the program does not work?

___1. Yes

___2. No

___3. Don't know

7. If yes, why do you think the program does not work for them?

_____

_____

_____

_____

III. PRACTICES

8. What methods do you use to get students to come to school?

___1. Incentives

___2. Calls to parents

___3. Truant officers

___4. Police

___5. Home visits

9. Complete the following: " After _____ absences my school takes the following action":

___1. Call parents (after ___ absences)
___2. Home visit (after ___ absences)
___3. Detention (after ___ absences)
___4. Suspension (after ___ absences)
___5. Contact truant officer (after ___ absences)
___6. Contact police (after ___ absences)

10. Do you offer a system of incentives?

___1. Yes

___2. No

11. What is rewarded? (check all that apply)

___1. Attendance

___2. Punctuality

___3. Grades

___4. Attendance at counselling sessions

___5. Other (specify)_____

12. What kinds of rewards are given? (check all that apply)

___1. Certificates

___2. Toys/games

___3. Trips

___4. Movies

___5. Food

___6. Parties

___7. Other (specify)_____

13. How often are rewards given out? (check all that apply)

___1. Weekly

___2. Monthly

___3. Quarterly

___4. Biannually

___5. Per contract

___6. Other(specify)_____

14. Have you developed any special techniques that you believe are effective?

___1. Yes

___2. No

15. If yes, please describe them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

IV. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

16. Comment on this statement: "Parental involvement is very important to the program's success".

___1. Strongly agree

___2. Agree somewhat

___3. No opinion

___4. Disagree somewhat

___5. Strongly disagree

17. What kinds of parental involvement activities are there in your program?

___1. Trips

___2. Workshops

___3. Tutoring

___4. Other (specify)_____

18. Do you find it difficult to get parents, in general, involved in school activities?

___1. Yes

___2. No

19. Do you find it more difficult getting parents of students in the program involved in school activities than getting parents, in general,involved?

___1. More difficult

___2. Somewhat difficult

___3. The same

___4. Less difficult

20. Why do you think that is?

_____

_____

_____

21. What methods could be used to increase parent involvement with the program?

___1. Workshops
___2. Family/parent services
___3. Dinners
___4. Trips
___5. Entertainment
___6. Parenting classes
___7. Adult education
___8. Health services referrals
___9. Employment referrals
___10. Other (specify) _____

V. PROGRAM EVALUATION

22. Comment on this statement: "The program has improved students' attendance."

___1. Strongly agree

___2. Agree somewhat

___3. No opinion

___4. Disagree somewhat

___5. Strongly disagree

23. What are the <u>three components</u> of the program that are most effective at improving attendance? (Indicate 1,2,3 next to your choices, where 1= most effective)

___1. Peer Counseling
___2. Counseling
___3. Tutoring
___4. Home visits
___5. Incentives
___6. Parental involvement
___7. Job training
___8. Business alliances
___9. Detention
___10. Suspension
___11. Reporting extended truancy to police
___12. Reducing school size
___13. Mini-schools
___14. Big Brother/Sister Programs
___15. Smaller classes
___16. Independent study
___17. Other(specify)_____

24. What incentives, if any, are used in your program?

_____

_____

_____

25. How long does it usually take before you can see program-induced improvements in student attendance?

___1. < 6 months

___2. 6 months to 1 year

___3. 1 year to 2 years

___4. > 2 years

___5. Not applicable

___6. Don't know

26. Do changes need to be made in your school's program?

___1. Yes

___2. No

27. If yes, what kind of changes?

___1. Expand criteria to include more "at risk" students

___2. More staff training

___3. Smaller staff to student ratio

___4. More incentives

___5. Better incentives

___6. More contact with parents

___7. More interaction with students' teachers

___8. Other(specify)_____

_____

28. Should the program be expanded in your school?

___1. Yes

___2. No

___3. Don't know

29. If yes, what would it include that it does not now?

___1. Peer Counseling
___2. Counseling
___3. Tutoring
___4. Home visits
___5. Incentives
___6. Parental involvement
___7. Job training
___8. Business alliances
___9. Detention
___10. Suspension
___11. Reporting extended truancy to police
___12. Reducing school size
___13. Mini-schools
___14. Big Brother/Sister Programs
___15. Smaller classes
___16. Independent study
___17. Other(specify)_____

30. How would you rate this program in terms of its effect on improving student attendance?

___1. Excellent

___2. Very good

___3. No opinion

___4. Fair

___5 Poor

31. Comment on this statement: "The program has improved students' academic performance".

___1. Strongly agree

___2. Agree somewhat

___3. No opinion

___4. Disagree somewhat

___5. Strongly disagree

32. On what do you base that conclusion?

___1. Standardized test scores

___2. Class grades

___3. Teacher evaluations

___4. Feedback from students

___5. Other (specify)_____

33. What improvements would you like to see in the program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

34. Do you think it is possible to reduce the dropout rate by increasing certain services that students receive?

___1. Yes

___2. No

___3. Don't know

35. If yes, what kind of services?

_____

_____

_____

_____

36. How would you rate the attitude of school staff towards the program?

___1. Extremely cooperative

___2. Cooperative

___3. No opinion

___4. Uncooperative

___5. Extremely uncooperative

37. What makes your program special?

_____

_____

_____

_____

SURVEY OF STUDENT

ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT/DROP-OUT PREVENTION PROGRAM

Please answer the following questions as they apply to you. Thank you.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. How old are you?_____

2. How would you describe your race?

___1. Black American

___2. White

___3. Asian

___4. Hispanic

___5. Black Carribean

___6. American Indian

___7. Other (specify)_____

3. What grade are you in?_____

4. What language is spoken in your home?_____

5. Did your parents graduate from high school?

___1. Yes

___2. No

___3. Don't know

6. Did your parents graduate from college?

___1. Yes

___2. No

___3. Don't know

7. Were you ever left back or held over a grade?

___1. Yes

___2. No

8. If yes, how many times?_____

II. ATTENDANCE

9. What are the three biggest reasons you are absent from school?:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

10. Are there any classes or school activities that you hate to miss?

___1. Yes

___2. No

11a. If yes, which ones?_____

11b. If yes,why?

___1. Good teacher.

___2. I'm together with friends.

___3. I find it interesting.

___4. I need the class to graduate.

___5. Other (specify) _____

12. Why do you cut class or miss school? Check all that apply:

__do not like school

__can learn more out of school

__not interested in school

__school is too hard

__failing

__dislike a teacher

__dislike a subject

__need money to help at home

__dislike students

__prefer work to school

__school too dangerous

__need/want spending money

__problems with drugs/alcohol

__sickness

__friends not in school

__suspended

__marriage

__parents wanted me home

__Pregnancy

__do not know

Of all the reasons you checked above, choose the **SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT REASON** and circle that answer.

III. ATTENDANCE PROGRAM

13. What are the best things about this program? (check all that apply)

___1. Friends

___2. Good teachers

___3. Help with school work

___4. Getting out of class

___5. Rewards

14. What are the worst things about this program? (check all that apply).

___1. People call or visit my house too often.

___2. Kids make fun of me for being in the program.

___3. The prizes are not good.

___4. I never get any of the prizes.

___5. Being in the program makes me feel different.

___6. Other (explain)_____
_____

IV. HOME LIFE

15. Do your parents ever keep you out of school?

___1. Yes

___2. No

16. If yes, for what reasons?

___1. To help with my brothers or sisters.

___2. To translate English for them.

___3. To do housework.

___4. To keep them company.

___5. To help them work.

___6. Other (specify)_____

17. Do you work now?

___1. Yes

___2. No

18. If yes, how many hours per week?

___1. Less than 5 hours

___2. 5-10 hours

___3. 11-15 hours

___4. 16-20 hours

___5. More than 20 hours

V. FUTURE PLANS

19. What kind of job would you like to get?

_____

_____

20. Do you think the kind of job you want requires a high school diploma?

___1. Yes

___2. No

___3. Don't know

21. What would make you come to school more?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B:

Cover Letter

Steven Lindner
330 First Avenue #8B
New York, New York 10009

,1990

Dear

Thank you for your time on the phone the other day. As I explained, I am a graduate student at Columbia University Teachers College and my master's thesis will compare programs across the country that use innovative techniques to improve student attendance and/or decrease the dropout rate of at-risk students. My study will analyze the survey responses to determine what factors are present in successful attendance improvement programs.

This package includes fourteen surveys to be filled out by:

(1) program director and/or school principal,
(3) attendance improvement staff, and
(10) students.

Please return the completed surveys to me by March 1, 1990. I have included a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience.

I would also appreciate receiving any written information you have on your program: its mission statement, guidelines, informational brochures, etc.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. I will be happy to provide you with a copy of my study upon completion. If you have any questions, please call me at (212) 674-7605. I will call you next week to confirm that the surveys met with your approval.

Sincerely,

Steven Lindner